



# TACKLING GUN VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC IN ALAMEDA COUNTY:

**A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY  
(2019-2023)**

**ALAMEDA COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
PAMELA Y. PRICE, DISTRICT ATTORNEY**



**ALAMEDA COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
PAMELA Y. PRICE, DISTRICT ATTORNEY**





## Office of the District Attorney Alameda County

**PAMELA Y. PRICE**  
District Attorney  
alcoda.org

December 2, 2024

Dear Alameda County Community,

When I took office as your District Attorney, I made a commitment to advance an ethical and equitable system of justice that protects public safety while addressing the root causes of violence. The human cost of the epidemic of gun violence in Alameda County is devastating – families forever mourning loved ones, survivors living with lifelong trauma, children afraid to walk to school, and communities held in cycles of violence.

Between 2019 and 2023, an average of three Alameda County residents were killed by firearms each week. Behind every statistic is a shattered family and community. Gun violence disproportionately impacts our most vulnerable residents, particularly women, children and communities of color who have long suffered from systemic inequities. The trauma of gun violence ripples through generations, affecting front-line workers, educators, healthcare providers, attorneys, inspectors, victim advocates, and countless others who carry the weight of this crisis. We cannot accept this as normal.

Under my administration, the Alameda County District Attorney's Office has taken bold steps to combat gun violence while promoting equity and healing. In 2023, we launched an innovative Gun Violence Restraining Order Outreach Project to educate communities about this vital prevention tool. We also implemented a pilot Mentor Gun Diversion Program, offering non-violent youth in possession of a gun pathways to transformation to stop the potential for escalating harm.

In November 2024, we secured a grant of more than \$5.5 million to improve case management for gun cases and coordinate gun relinquishment with law enforcement and court partners. We are doing the work to take guns away from people who are a danger to themselves or others. A large part of our work recognizes the intersectionality between intimate partner violence, especially domestic violence targeting women, and gun violence.

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This report represents an unprecedented collaboration between public safety and public health partners. Through our biannual Gun Violence Prevention Roundtables in 2023 and 2024, we united law enforcement agencies, the California Department of Justice, federal partners, public health experts, and community-based organizations to develop comprehensive solutions to address the epidemic of gun violence in Alameda County. Our collaborative approach recognizes that meaningful violence prevention requires both strategic enforcement and investment in addressing the systemic inequities that fuel cycles of violence.

The data and recommendations in this report will guide the County's continued work to reduce gun violence while advancing justice reform. Success demands that we strengthen our enforcement of gun safety laws, increase support for community violence intervention programs, and ensure accountability for those who traffic illegal firearms. Equally crucial is our commitment to diversion programs and healing-centered approaches that can break cycles of violence.

This work requires a sustained partnership between our office, law enforcement, public health advocates, community organizations, elected officials, and residents most impacted by violence. Together, we can build an Alameda County where all residents can live free from the fear and trauma of gun violence.

In Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela Y. Price". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pamela Y. Price  
Alameda County District Attorney

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## Leadership Addressing Gun Violence in Alameda County

### **Alameda County District Attorney's Office**

The Alameda County District Attorney's Office (ACDAO) represents the People of the State of California on behalf of more than 1.6 million residents in Alameda County. The ACDAO investigates and prosecutes crimes in Alameda County and brings civil actions involving consumers, workers, real estate and environmental matters. The ACDAO further serves as a steward for racial justice in the criminal justice system under the Racial Justice Act. In addition, the ACDAO also serves as the Legal Advisor to the Grand Jury of Alameda County.

The mission of the ACDAO is to advance an ethical and equitable system of justice to protect public safety, support survivors and witnesses and uphold the rights of the accused. The ACDAO works to sustain a safe and livable community through fair, transparent, and responsible administration of justice; restore public trust, end mass incarceration, root out racial, socioeconomic and gender disparities; provide compassionate support for harmed persons; create innovative programs to enhance the lives of vulnerable and underrepresented populations, reintegrate and redeem our returning citizens, empower families, and guide youth for a bright, healthy future.

ACDAO is dedicated to combating gun violence in the nation, as well as our county - a violence that has become an epidemic in Alameda County as well as the rest of America since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Halting the proliferation of guns and the tragedies they cause is a top priority for Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Y. Price's administration. As such, she has taken initial, innovative cross-jurisdictional programming and data management steps toward addressing gun violence in Alameda County.

### **In Recognition of Alameda County's Public Health Department**

The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) works to serve 1.68 million residents across 13 cities and unincorporated areas of Alameda County. Its mission is to work in partnership with the community to ensure the optimal health and wellbeing of all people through a dynamic and responsive process respecting the diversity of the community and challenging us to provide for present and future generations. The



department has an array of programs and services designed to protect the health and safety of County residents and is committed to promoting peaceful families and communities as part of its Community Health Improvement Plan. Within ACPHD, the Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) is tasked with investigating, understanding, and addressing violence through a public health approach that centers on four areas: Data Collection (to understand the scope of violence in our communities), Narrative Change (to share common definitions and framing for conversations about violence), Advancing Best Practices (to scale up effective prevention and intervention strategies), and Policy Advocacy (to promote and support community power and leadership efforts to address structural issues that contribute to violence).

The ACDAO is beholden to the ACPHD for sharing invaluable data collection, analysis, and policy considerations informing the ACDAO's findings and recommendations. Gun violence will not be successfully combatted absent strategic collaboration across agencies and disciplines. In particular, the public health data presented in Section I of this report originated from ACPHD. ACPHD anticipates using the information shared particularly in Section I of this report for further analyses and to inform future convenings and publications. Our reports taken together will provide crucial information to the County, law enforcement, community organization, and individuals seeking to build a safer County free of gun violence.

### **In Recognition of Alameda County Board of Supervisors Contributions**

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

### Technical Contributions

The ACDAO recognizes the technical contribution of its Senior Justice Program Analyst Marcus McKay who served as project manager and a primary data analyst in the

## Acknowledgements

research and drafting of this report. Recognition also is extended to ACDAO Policy Chief and Senior Assistant District Attorney Cynthia Chandler and Assistant Chief of Administration and Operations Tara Anderson, who were charged with overseeing research on strategies for interrupting gun violence and reviewing data and ongoing practices concerning the use and traffic of illegal firearms in Alameda County, the state, and the nation for the period of 2019 through 2023. Chief Chandler further contributed to the drafting and editing of this report. Special thanks are also extended to ACDAO Law Clerk Brianna Jackson for her work researching firearms policy changes and contribution to drafting and editing.

The ACDAO additionally recognizes Ari Davis, David Padilla, Kristen Clopton, and Julia Raifman from ACPHD who contributed significant data, root cause analyses, and narrative and recommendations regarding the public health impacts of gun violence.

# Report Methodology

## Data Sources

The data in this report draws from both public health and criminal justice data systems. Mortality statistics are derived from death certificate records of Alameda County residents, sourced from the California Department of Health's vital records and analyzed by the Alameda County Public Health Department. Complementary mortality data was obtained from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC WONDER). All mortality metrics reflect decedent residence rather than incident location. Following statistical disclosure control practices, we suppress mortality counts below 10. Rates based on counts of 10 to 19 are documented with an asterisk in the report and should be interpreted with caution, as they may be unstable.

Firearms data, including retail sales and crime gun recovery information, is sourced from the California Department of Justice's Automated Firearms System (AFS), which aggregates submissions from local law enforcement agencies. A significant limitation is the incomplete tracking of crime guns originating outside California, creating potential underestimation in our analysis of firearm flows.

## Demographic Categorizations

Our analysis employs mutually exclusive racial and ethnic categories, with Hispanic/Latino/a/x designated as a distinct group. Consequently, African American/Black, White, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American classifications specifically denote non-Hispanic/Latino/a/x populations. This taxonomic approach allows for clearer demographic pattern analysis while acknowledging the complexity of racial and ethnic identification.

A notable data gap exists regarding sexual orientation and gender identity (SO/GI) variables, which are not captured in current mortality data systems. This systematic omission impedes both our understanding of disparate impacts across these populations and our ability to design targeted intervention strategies to advance health equity.

## Scope: Focus on Interpersonal Firearm Violence

While acknowledging firearm suicide as a significant component of gun-related mortality in Alameda County, this report primarily examines interpersonal firearm violence,

## Report Methodology

specifically assaults and homicides. This focused scope reflects immediate policy priorities while recognizing the interconnected nature of different forms of gun violence. The ACDAO maintains a parallel commitment to suicide prevention and encourages the address of firearm suicide through future dedicated analyses and interventions. Comprehensive gun violence prevention strategies must incorporate both interpersonal violence and suicide prevention frameworks.

## Overview

Gun violence represents a critical public health and safety emergency in Alameda County and an issue of paramount importance to the Alameda County community. The pervasiveness of guns in our community hinders collective efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all Alameda County residents. The top priority for Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Y. Price's administration and the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) is to halt the proliferation of guns and the tragedies of gun violence. As such, the ACDAO sought collaboration and expertise from ACPHD in documenting the extent and pattern of gun access and violence in the County and to identify points of initial innovative programming and data management, as well as work still to be done.

The goal of this publication is to:

- a) Bring greater awareness to trends in firearm distribution, ghost guns, ownership, and violence since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b) Highlight public health trends on gun-related injury and death, examine disparities among demographic groups, and understand the intersectionality of gun violence with intimate partner violence, particularly against women and children.
- c) Discuss how intersecting structural inequities such as neighborhood conditions, socio-economic status, domestic violence, and inadequate access to resources contribute to gun violence.
- d) Explain new state and local policies and initiatives aimed at supporting the safe use and storage of legal firearms and keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous persons.
- e) Promote areas for further action, including safe gun ownership, firearm relinquishment, gun violence restraining orders, and Community Violence Intervention models (CVI) to assist with interrupting the proliferation of illegal firearms and gun violence within our county.

Rates of gun violence have escalated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This report summarizes Alameda County firearms data trends from 2019 to 2023. The distribution of gun violence in the County reflects deep-rooted structural inequities. Poverty, gender repression, domestic violence, vulnerability of children, lack of opportunity, and unmet community needs drive high levels of violence in Alameda County. Women and children in the County are increasingly vulnerable to violence. Additionally, Black and Hispanic residents suffering from a legacy of racist public policies in housing, economic development and opportunity are most vulnerable to violence, and this violence drives health inequities across the County.

## Overview

The increase of gun violence coincided with multiple contributing factors: pandemic-related social and economic disruptions, accelerated firearm acquisition rates, and the emergence of unserialized firearms (“ghost guns”). Each week from 2019 to 2023, an average of three Alameda County residents were killed by a firearm<sup>1</sup>, and 12 were shot and injured, causing enormous pain to those directly impacted and their loved ones.<sup>1</sup> Many of those impacted are young Alameda County residents. In fact, gun violence is the leading cause of death among children ages 1 to 17 and transition-aged youth ages 18 to 24.<sup>2</sup>

Firearm violence further intersects with domestic violence, which disproportionately impacts women and transgender and LGBTQ+ people. Domestic violence incidents involving firearms are 12 times more likely to result in death than those involving other weapons or bodily force.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, an abusive male partner’s access to firearms increases the risk of female victim homicide by fivefold.<sup>4</sup>

Gun violence has cascading short-term and long-term effects on the health and well-being of communities. It robs victims of their lives and families and friends of their loved ones. Those who survive gun violence often experience physical and mental health impacts the rest of their lives. Gun violence also inflicts trauma on those who witness a shooting or hear gunshots, particularly vulnerable children. It causes residents to feel unsafe in their neighborhoods, and fearful to be in public spaces and engage in healthy activities.<sup>5</sup> Exposure to gun violence is tied to a wide range of poor health outcomes, like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression as well as increased involvement in the criminal-legal system. It is also connected to increased rates of chronic health conditions like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and asthma.<sup>6,7,8</sup> At a neighborhood level, high rates of gun violence are linked to lower levels of civic engagement and fewer economic opportunities.<sup>9</sup>

Gun violence in Alameda County is a complex challenge that requires a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach involving collaboration between public safety, public health, and the communities most impacted. Tackling the issue demands long-term investments in mending the deep structural inequities within our county, ensuring that all residents – including those most likely to be victims or engaged in gun violence – have access to the resources and services they need to thrive. Addressing gun violence calls for continued policy efforts to reduce the flow of illegal guns into our communities and to separate at-risk individuals from firearm access, as a wide body of research shows that such gun laws reduce violence. Solutions involve ongoing education for gun owners on safe gun handling and storage. In addition, addressing gun violence necessitates sustained investments in community violence intervention, with a focus on breaking the cycles of gun violence.

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<sup>i</sup> This report uses 'gun' and 'firearm' interchangeably. 'Firearm' refers to the specific weapon, while 'gun' is used more generally or as an adjective to describe events.

## Alameda County District Attorney's Office

Over the period of review covered by this report, the State of California has added to its gun laws, solidifying California as having the strongest gun laws in the United States.<sup>10</sup> These changes in statute occurred in parallel with local focused efforts. In June 2021, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution declaring gun violence as a public health crisis. This declaration came on the heels of a rise in homicides and following advocacy from several collective organizations and community members interested in ending gun violence in the community.

Beginning in 2023, among adopting several new gun violence reduction strategies, the ACDAO began collaborations with numerous public safety stakeholders, including convening gun violence prevention roundtable discussions with local law enforcement agencies, with participation by the ACPHD and other gun violence prevention stakeholders. This report builds upon these efforts to share information to reduce gun violence within our County. This report reviews gun violence data in Alameda County from 2019 to 2023 to provide research on structural drivers and firearm trends contributing to gun violence. The research is data-driven and elevates opportunities for collaboration between law enforcement, the ACDAO, the Alameda County Department of Public Health, and community stakeholders to promote safety, effectively advance the investigation and prosecution of illegal firearms crimes, and to interrupt the proliferation of illegal firearms and gun violence within our county.

Communities need information to develop strategies and policies to curb firearm proliferation and violence. State and County leadership has made gun safety a top priority. There is essential, urgent work to be done. This Report offers contemporary data on firearms in Alameda County, along with an array of recommendations for possible initiatives and collaborations between law enforcement and the ACDAO to build public safety. This report represents an opportunity for shared knowledge and learning between Alameda County agencies and community members. Data provided will support community-based organizations in the ongoing development and implementation of effective, data-driven, and inclusive strategies to combat gun violence in Alameda County. Further, data provided will highlight points for future strategic collaboration among local law enforcement agencies in Alameda County, the Courts, the District Attorney's Office, and the Public Health Department's Office of Violence Prevention to inform decisions to reduce violence and promote healing, safety, and justice.

# I: Public Health Impact of Gun Violence and the Contribution of Structural Inequities

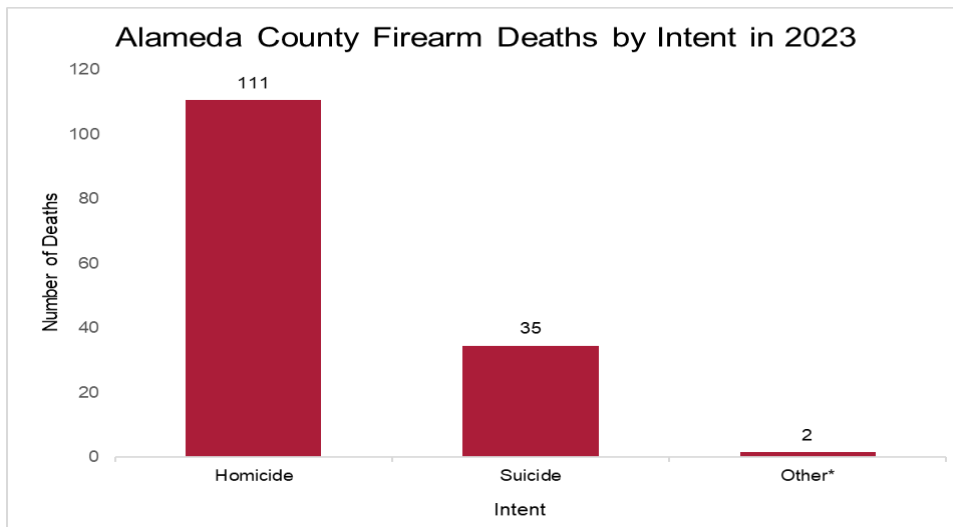
## A. Overview of Gun Violence Within Alameda County



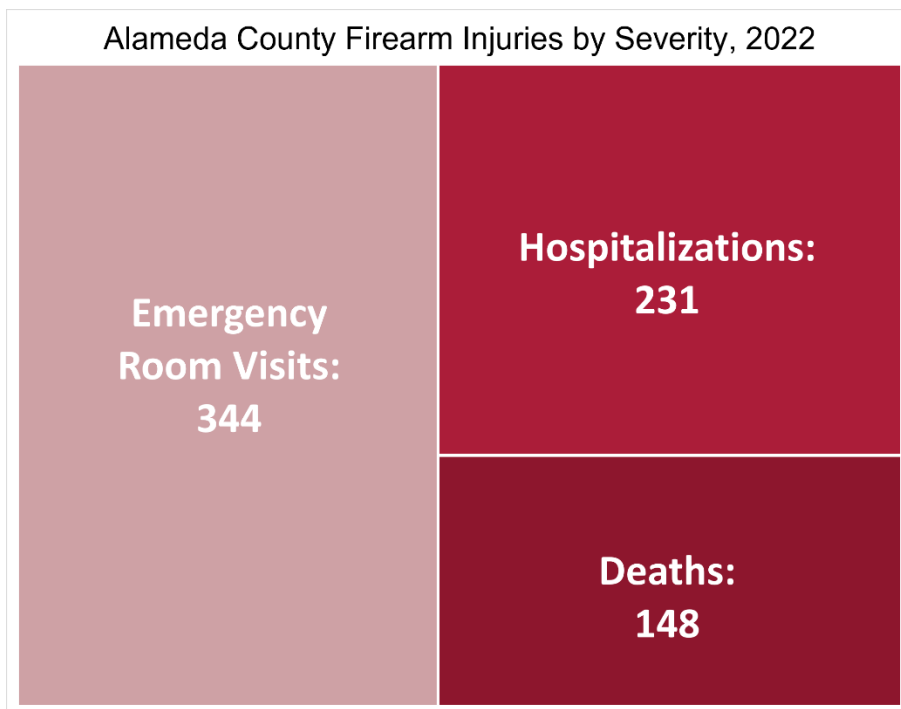
Gun violence is a public health issue in Alameda County which takes multiple forms, including gun homicide, gun suicide, unintentional firearm injury, and police-involved shootings. Each of these incidents has widespread impacts on residents. In 2023, the county experienced 111-gun homicides, 35-gun suicides, and 2 other gun-related deaths (including unintentional injuries, undetermined intent and police-involved shootings).<sup>11</sup> In addition to fatalities, gun violence leaves many survivors with severe injuries. In 2022, there were 344 emergency room visits and 231 hospitalizations for gunshot-related injuries.<sup>12</sup>



## Alameda County District Attorney's Office



*\*Other category includes unintentional injury, undetermined intent and police-involved shooting*



## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

### Why Focus on Guns?

#### *Guns Drive High Levels of Interpersonal Violence*

Guns are the primary driver of the most severe forms of interpersonal violence carried out in the County. The presence of a gun can quickly turn what would have normally resulted in a verbal argument, or possibly a fistfight, into a homicide. The lethality of guns, coupled with their easy access significantly contributes to the county's high homicide rate. From 2019 to 2023, 83% (537/644) of all Alameda County residents who died by homicide were killed by a gun. During this period, firearms accounted for 93% (155/166) of homicides involving children and youth (ages 0-24).

#### *Guns Increase the Risk of Suicide*

Guns also contribute to high suicide levels in Alameda County as access to a firearm drastically increases the likelihood that a suicide attempt will be fatal. The lethality and irreversible nature of firearms can turn a mental health crisis into a suicide. While only 1-5% of suicide attempts using methods like cutting or ingesting drugs are lethal, 90% of firearm suicide attempts result in death.<sup>13</sup> In Alameda County, firearms are the second most common method of suicide.<sup>14</sup> From 2019 to 2023 an average of one Alameda County resident died by firearm suicide every 9 days.

Interventions that create time and space between a person in crisis and a firearm are effective in reducing suicide, allowing individuals to seek support they need.<sup>15</sup> As an example, in 2024, Brady United Against Gun Violence ("Brady") launched a new campaign entitled "Pause to Heal" with the Illinois Department of Public Health aimed at raising awareness about the life-saving potential of Firearm Restraining Orders (FROs), also known as "red flag laws," by encouraging people take time, or "pause", and utilize these measures when necessary to prevent gun violence and promote healing within communities.<sup>16</sup> In California, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) launched a similar "prevent and prepare" campaign to educate the public about suicide prevention and Gun Violence Restraining Orders.<sup>17</sup>

### Changes In Firearm Homicides Over Time

During the COVID-19 pandemic, gun violence increased across the United States (U.S.) and in Alameda County. Deep structural inequities in poverty, education, and health, and the pressures of a high cost of living, left Alameda County vulnerable to disruptions caused by the pandemic. Communities that already had the least resources were most affected by exposure to the virus, loss of work, and reduced public services – including community violence intervention efforts. During the same period, there was a rise in gun purchases and distribution of ghost guns across the U.S. and in Alameda County.

## Alameda County District Attorney's Office

While this report is focused on the increase in firearm homicide in Alameda County from 2019 to 2023, longer-term data show variability in the firearm homicide rate over time. It is important to note that even at its peak in 2022, the gun homicide rate in Alameda County was far lower than it was in the mid-2000s and the late 1990s. Since 2006, there was a steady decline in the gun homicide rate in Alameda County to a 3-decade low, with 61 homicides in 2018.<sup>18</sup> A range of successful violence reduction strategies involving public safety and community-based organizations likely contributed to the decline in firearm homicide leading up to 2018.<sup>19</sup> Following the social, work, and public service disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the firearm homicide rate rose steeply.

The surge in firearm homicides in Alameda County mirrored those that occurred across the country, as Americans grappled with the disruptions, instability, and uncertainty caused by the global pandemic.<sup>20</sup> Alameda County may have been particularly impacted due to stark social inequities. Many vital violence prevention services were disrupted or weakened. For example, a 2023 audit of Oakland Ceasefire—the backbone of Oakland's gun violence prevention strategy—found that “there was a decline in the fidelity with which the six core components were implemented, leading to a surge in gun violence.”<sup>21</sup> At this same time, Alameda County was flooded with the distribution of ghost guns which fueled gun violence.<sup>22</sup> By 2021, there were 119 firearm homicides of Alameda County residents, a 95% increase from the 61-gun homicides just three years prior.<sup>23</sup>

Following the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alameda County focused on supporting violence prevention efforts to address the rise in gun violence. These reinforced services included bolstering the Ceasefire strategy, and increased funding for community violence interventions by local organizations.<sup>24</sup> The Alameda County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in 2021 declaring gun violence a public health crisis and directed county departments to identify and deploy resources to address it.<sup>25</sup> The ACDPH Department created an Office of Violence Prevention. The Alameda County Probation Department launched an inter-agency taskforce to address violence prevention.

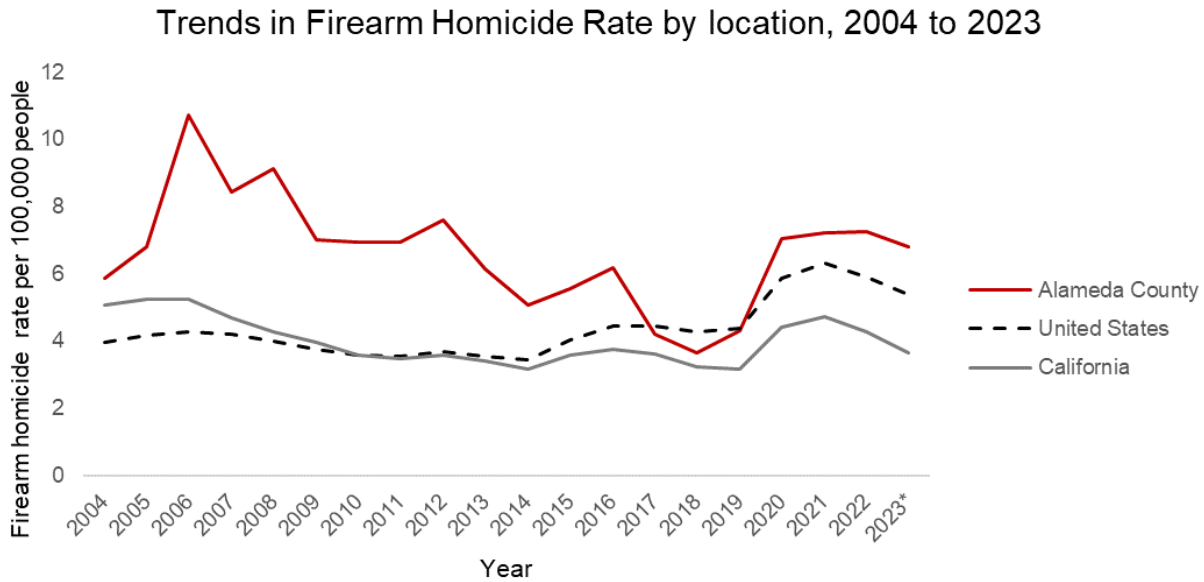
Beginning in 2023, the Alameda County District Attorney's Office convened gun violence roundtables fostering collaboration across County law enforcement partners and community-based organizations, hosted community-education and resource events to raise awareness about gun violence and gun violence restraining orders, issued a series of public service announcements about supportive services, sent a targeted mailer to almost 40,000 residences with high risk factors for gun violence,<sup>ii</sup> expanded resources available to victims of domestic violence, and implemented an innovative diversion program for youth arrested for simple firearm possession designed to interrupt possible escalation of gun crimes.

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<sup>ii</sup> The gun violence mailer is provided in Appendix I.

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

These collective efforts coincided with a slight decrease in gun homicides. However, there is much work to be done to return to the successes experienced before the pandemic. The gun homicide rate in 2023 remained 1.8 times higher than it was in 2018.<sup>26</sup>

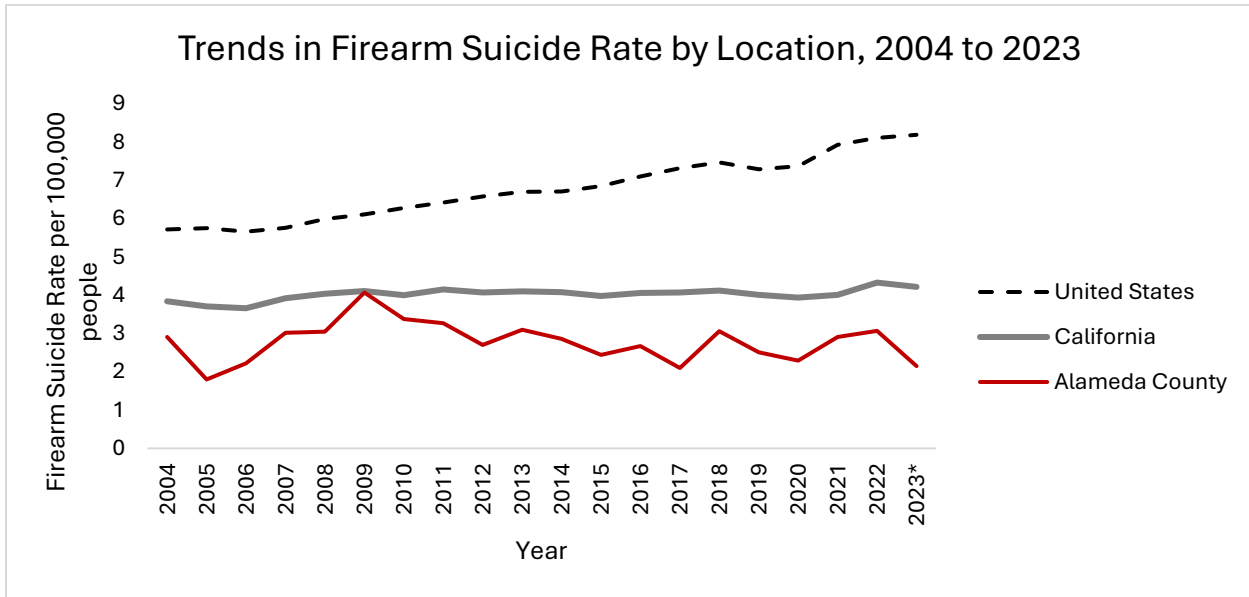


\*Indicates provisional data for 2023. Finalized data has yet to be released by the CDC; rates may change the slightly.

### Lower Rates of Firearm Suicide in Alameda County

The firearm suicide rate in Alameda County is far lower than the national or state rate.<sup>27</sup> This variation is a function of demographic differences unique to the Alameda County population as gun suicides are far more common in rural areas, and among older white men – Alameda County is a majority urban, diverse community.<sup>28</sup> Importantly, Alameda County’s relatively low suicide rate also is the result of strong gun laws and relatively lower rates of gun ownership.<sup>29</sup> Alameda County also has a well-established and robust network of crisis support suicide prevention hotlines. The gun suicide rate in Alameda County has remained relatively stable over the past two decades while the state and national firearm suicide rates have increased. Still, guns remain the second most common method used in suicides in Alameda County.<sup>30</sup>

## Alameda County District Attorney's Office



\*Indicates provisional data for 2023. Finalized data has yet to be released by the CDC; rates may change the slightly.

### Demographic Inequities in Firearm Homicide and Firearm Suicide

#### Sex

Male residents in Alameda County are disproportionately impacted by gun violence, accounting for nearly 9 out of 10 gun-homicide victims. This statistic mirrors state and national trends.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, female residents are disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence, and gun access greatly increases the risk that an abusive relationship will turn deadly. National statistics estimate that roughly half of all female homicide victims are killed by a former or current intimate partner.<sup>32</sup> When an abuser has access to a firearm the chances of intimate partner violence increase by 5-fold.<sup>33</sup> The impacts of domestic violence and firearms will be discussed in Part I, section C of this report.

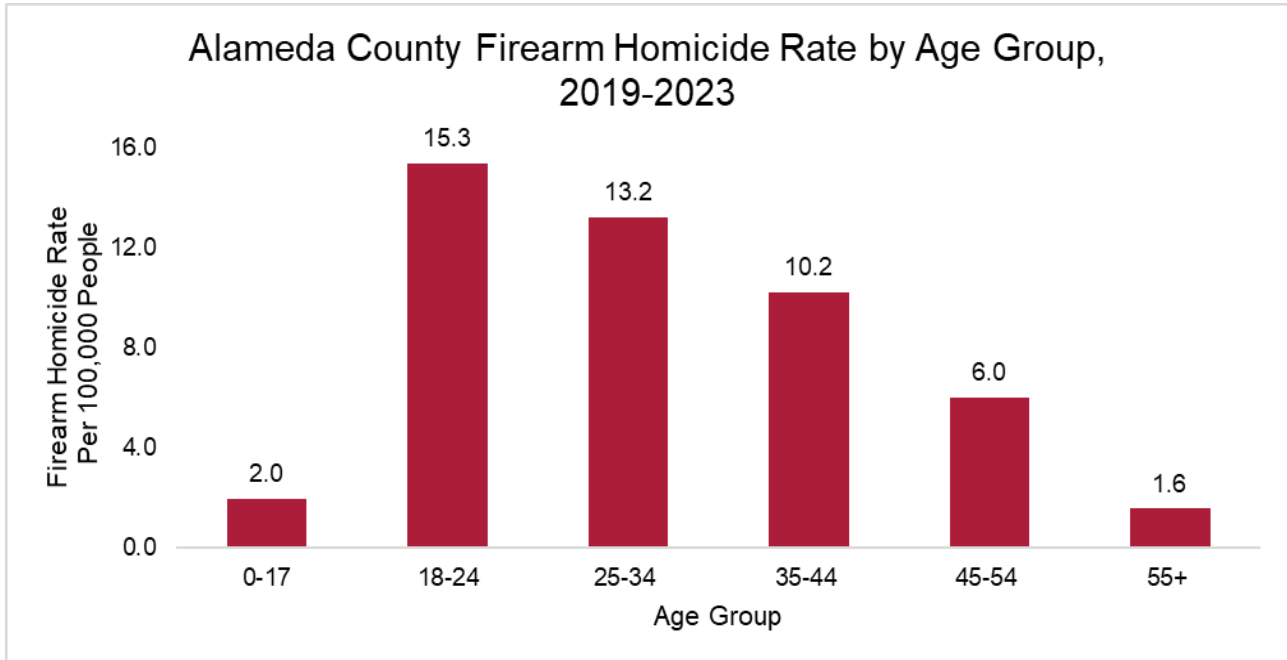
Males are at high risk for gun suicide comprising 85% of all gun suicides in the county.<sup>34</sup> Firearm access accounts for much of this disparity as males are more likely to have access to a firearm, and 90% of suicide attempts by firearm are lethal.<sup>35</sup> Males over the age of 65 are at the highest risk for firearm suicide. They account for 7% of the population but 22% of suicide decedents in the county.<sup>36</sup>

#### Age

Gun homicides disproportionately impact youth and young adults in Alameda County. Youth and young adults ages 18 to 34 are at highest risk for gun homicide comprising 24% of the Alameda County population but more than half (53%) of all gun homicide victims. When individuals reach their mid-30s the risk for homicide begins to taper off.

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

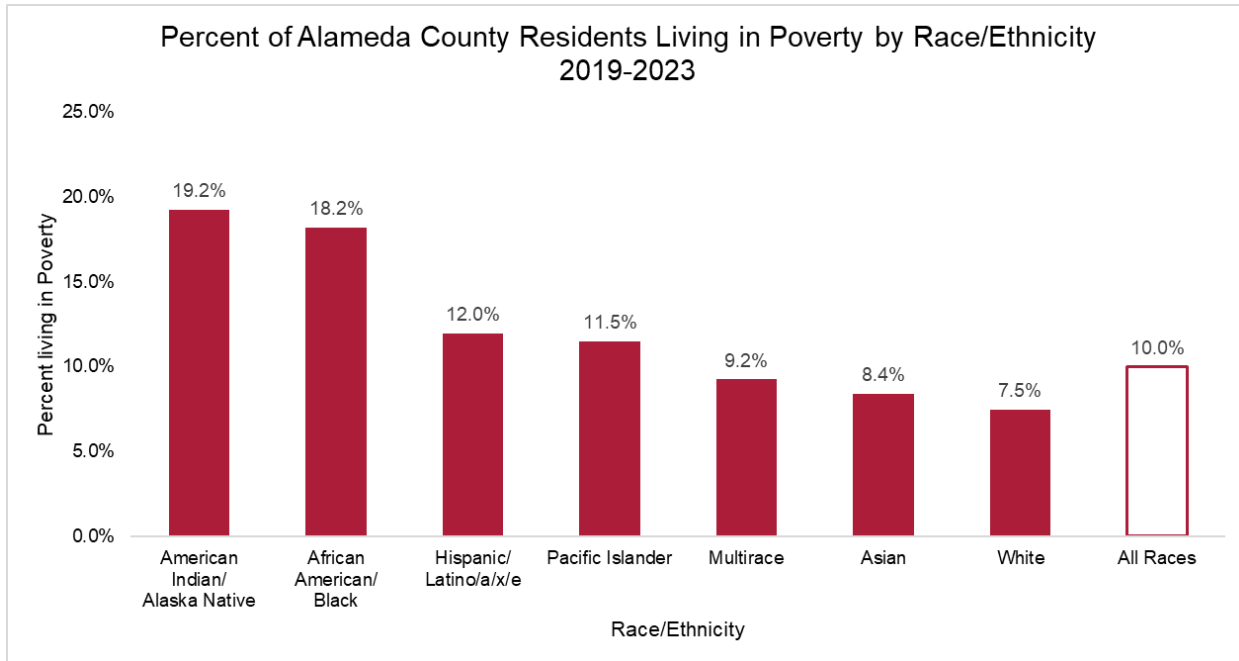
Those over the age of 55 have a relatively low risk for gun homicide. Unlike gun homicide, gun suicides tend to impact middle-aged and elderly adults at the highest rates. Alameda County residents over the age of 75 have the highest gun suicide rates.



### *Race/Ethnicity*

Interpersonal gun violence disproportionately impacts African American/Black, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latino/a/x/e residents in Alameda County. These disproportionate outcomes exist because of structural inequities that contribute to gun violence. Nearly one out of every five Black (18%) and American Indian/ Alaska Native (19%) residents, as well as, about one in eight (12%) Hispanic or Pacific Islander residents live below the federal poverty line – meaning a family of four makes less than \$32,000 a year.

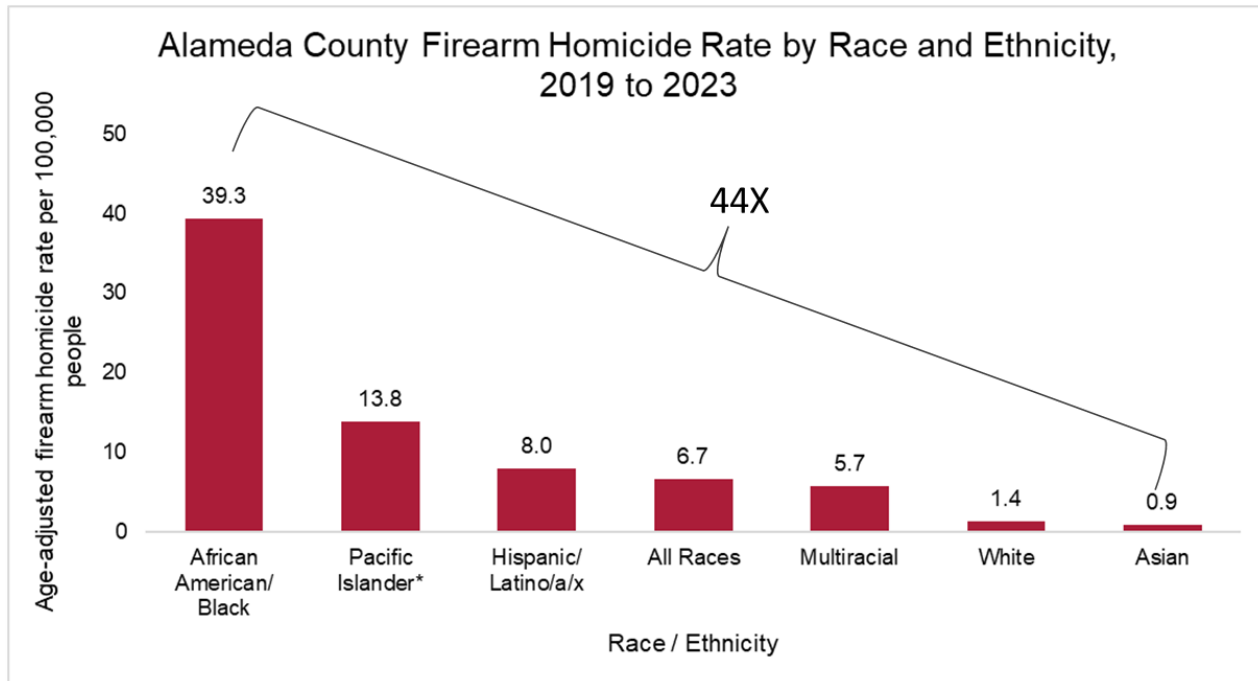
## Alameda County District Attorney's Office



These economic inequities contribute to heightened vulnerability to gun violence. Black residents are 28 times as likely, and Hispanic/Latino residents are nearly six times as likely to die by gun homicide compared to their white counterparts.

These disparities are even more pronounced among young males. Black males ages 15 to 34 make up roughly 5% of the population in the County but accounted for 48% of all gun homicide deaths from 2019 to 2023. Approximately one in every 1,000 Black males in this age group dies by gun homicide each year.<sup>37</sup> Put another way, if current gun homicide rates persist, a Black male turning 15 today has about a 2% chance of dying by gun homicide before reaching age 35.

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence



\*Indicates an unstable rate, less than 20 deaths from 2019 to 2023

These statistics underscore the urgency of the gun violence crisis among marginalized racial and ethnic groups. The scale of these racial disparities in gun violence victimization is unparalleled – no other disease or injury in Alameda County displays such stark disparities by race and ethnicity. In short, gun violence is a health equity and social justice issue. Addressing these racial disparities, and the systemic inequities which underlie them, is essential to promoting health and wellbeing for all Alameda County residents. These systemic inequities will be discussed further in Section D of this report.

The groups most impacted by gun suicide look different than those affected by firearm homicide. Firearm suicide disproportionately impacts white Alameda County residents, particularly elderly white males. White males ages 50 and older make up 6% of the Alameda County population but 37% of all suicide deaths in the county.<sup>38</sup> This disparity is partly a result of access to firearms; middle-aged and elderly white men are more likely to own firearms.<sup>39</sup>

### *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*

Data on gun homicides and suicides by sexual orientation and gender identity are not available at the county level. However, research indicates that structural stigma against LGBTQ+ populations leads to disproportionate rates of suicide and interpersonal violence. LGBTQ youth are particularly vulnerable, with one multi-state study finding sexual minority youth are three times more likely to attempt suicide compared to their



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heterosexual peers.<sup>40</sup> LGBTQ+ individuals also face a higher risk for being victimized by violence; they are over twice as likely to be a victim of violent crime, including firearm violence.<sup>41,42</sup> The lack of data on sexual orientation and gender identity hampers efforts to fully understand how gun violence impacts LGBTQ+ communities. Despite this limitation, the County remains committed to combating discrimination, stigma, and hate that drive these disparities.



### *Guns Used in Hate-Motivated Violence*

Guns play a significant role in hate crimes, amplifying the lethality of these acts of violence. Hate crimes target individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other aspects of identity. The presence of a gun in a hate crime greatly increases the likelihood of severe or fatal outcomes. Guns are far too often used by hate groups, and by individuals to threaten, intimidate, and terrorize groups from marginalized backgrounds. In recent years, anti-Black, anti-LGBTQ+, Antisemitic, and Anti-Asian mass shootings have occurred across the country, including in California.<sup>43,44</sup> A growing number of hate groups, particularly White Nationalist groups, have used firearms to intimidate and threaten racial and ethnic minorities, as well as those with differing political views.<sup>45</sup> While hate-motivated crimes in Alameda County can be difficult to track, there was a notable spike in anti-Asian violence at the start of the pandemic. Additionally, there have recently been increases in Anti-Jewish, Anti-Palestinian, and anti-Muslim hate.<sup>46</sup> The County remains committed to addressing the intersection of firearms and hate and ensuring that people of all identities feel safe and welcome in Alameda County.

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

### Geographic Disparities

Gun violence is not evenly distributed across Alameda County, with wide variation by city and neighborhood. Residents of Oakland have higher rates of gun homicide compared to the rest of the county. From 2019 to 2023, the gun homicide rate among Oakland residents was twice that of Alameda County. Similarly, residents of San Leandro and Hayward have gun homicide rates far higher than neighboring cities like Castro Valley and Fremont.<sup>47</sup> Notably, Fremont, while the second largest city in Alameda County, experienced fewer than 10 deaths due to gun homicide between 2019 and 2023.<sup>48</sup>

Gun homicides are further concentrated in certain under-resourced neighborhoods that face a legacy of discriminatory policies. Residents of the Elmhurst neighborhood in East Oakland, for example, have a gun homicide rate 5 times higher than the county rate.<sup>49</sup> This elevated rate is closely linked to socioeconomic conditions, including poverty. The poverty rate in Elmhurst is far higher than that of the county with over 20% of Elmhurst residents living in poverty (annual income of less than \$32,000 for a family of four).<sup>50</sup> Residents of these neighborhoods suffer from a range of poor health outcomes, including violence, because of these poor neighborhood conditions. The life expectancy of a resident of Elmhurst is 12 years less than a resident who lives only eight miles away in the Oakland hills.<sup>51</sup> These poor neighborhood conditions, that are rooted in discriminatory policy, drive racial disparities in violence.

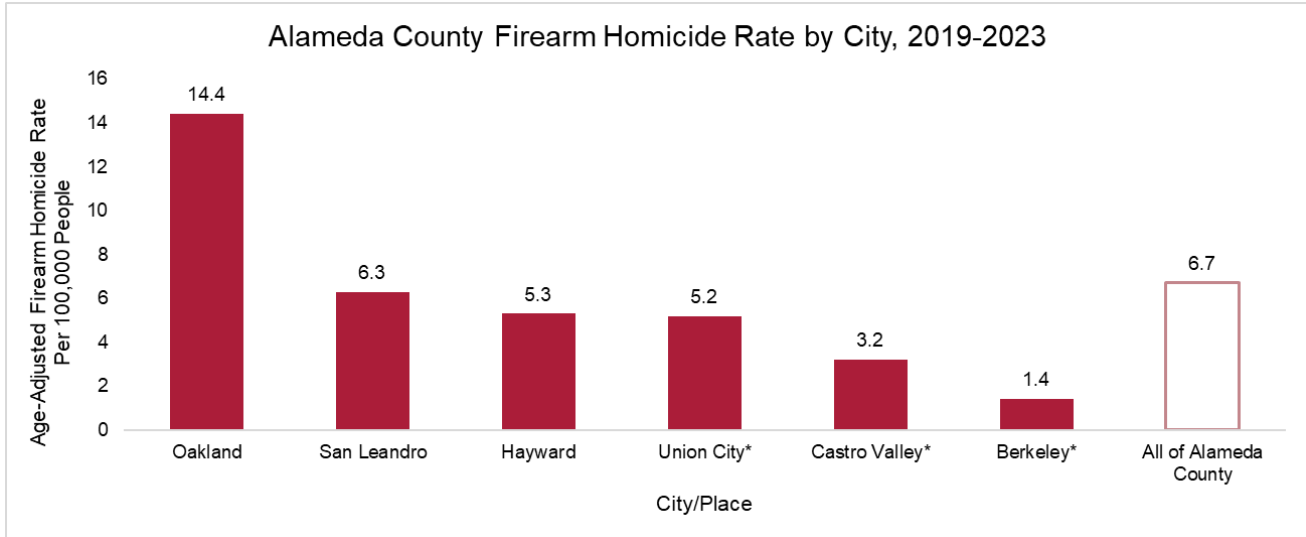
Research from around the country shows that there is a clear connection between poverty and concentrated disadvantage and higher levels of violence. Residents who grow up in these neighborhoods are often exposed to a range of adverse childhood experiences, including gun violence, all of which increase the risk of violence and other poor health outcomes later in life.<sup>52</sup>

Many of these disparities stem from discriminatory housing policies, like redlining, racially restrictive covenants and other inequitable zoning policies, that have created urban areas of poverty, limited economic opportunities, and concentrated disadvantage. Such policies allowed white middle-class residents to move to suburban areas and accumulate wealth through homeownership while effectively barring non-white residents from relocating from urban areas. These decades-old discriminatory policies have had lasting impacts on the health and wellbeing of Alameda County residents today, creating neighborhoods with persistent poverty, underfunded services and limited economic opportunities.<sup>53</sup>

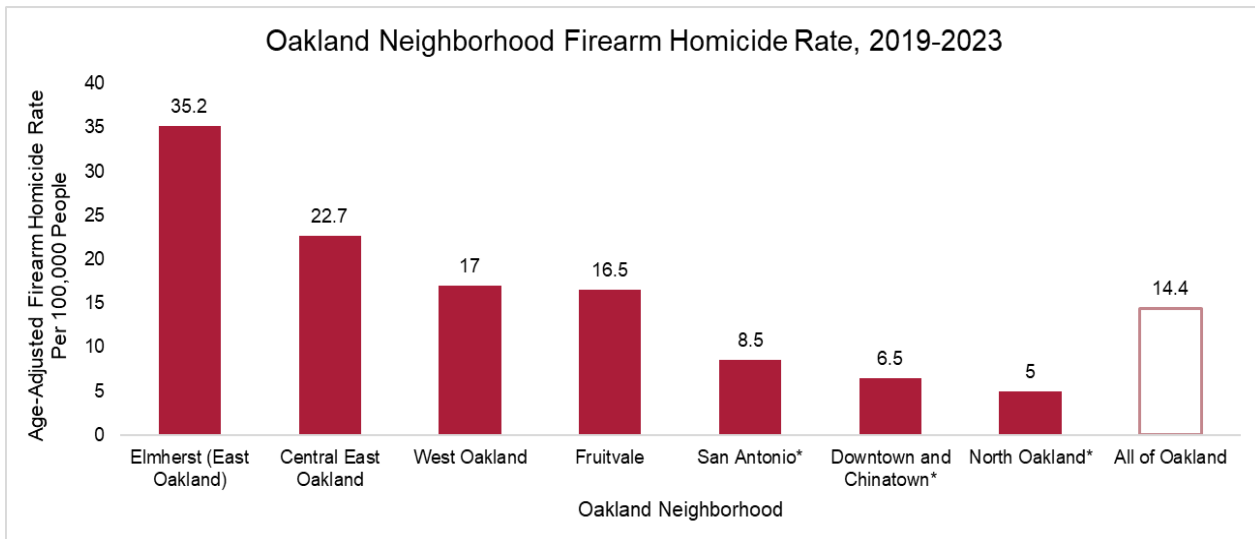
Over the last three decades, new demographic shifts have further perpetuated inequity. National economic forces, such as globalization and the decline of labor unions, have led to deindustrialization and a loss of many well-paying working-class jobs, which many Black and Hispanic residents relied upon.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the growth of the technology sector has fueled economic inequality in Alameda County and the Bay Area. Wealthy individuals have moved into the county, driving up the cost of living and

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spurring gentrification.<sup>55</sup> These factors have added additional strain on under-resourced communities, exacerbating disparities, contributing to feelings of hopelessness, and thereby increasing the risk for gun violence.



*\* Indicates an unstable rate, less than 20 deaths from 2019 to 2023. Cities with less than 10 deaths from 2019 to 2023 are excluded as the rate cannot be reliably calculated. These cities include Fremont, Livermore, Pleasanton, Alameda, Dublin, Newark, San Lorenzo, Albany, Emeryville, Piedmont and other unincorporated places.*



*\* Indicates an unstable rate, less than 20 deaths from 2019 to 2023. Neighborhoods with less than 10 deaths from 2019 to 2023 were excluded as the rate cannot be reliably calculated. These neighborhoods include Lower Hills, Northwest Hills and Southwest Hills.*

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

### Recommendations - Addressing Gun Violence

Protecting our communities from firearm violence requires a multi-faceted lens of public policy, public safety, education, and innovative strategies that engage community. The complexity of the issue also opens a variety of potential interventions that can be designed, implemented, and evaluated for our health and safety. These interventions include:

- 1) Reducing access to lethal means among those at elevated risk for suicide or interpersonal violence.
- 2) Restricting the flow of trafficked guns into our communities.
- 3) Implementing protection orders and removing firearms from prohibited persons.
- 4) Holding gun owners responsible for safe storage practices and educating the public about the critical importance of safe storage practices.
- 5) Supporting legislation to reduce the ease of access to illegally manufactured "ghost guns."
- 6) Effective and consistent monitoring of licensed gun dealers to ensure compliance with all the rules and regulations to ensure responsible gun ownership.
- 7) Funding and implementing community violence intervention strategies and prevention efforts that include mentoring, socio-emotional healing, and life skills to build positive and nurturing development.
- 8) Addressing the structural inequities that contribute to violence.

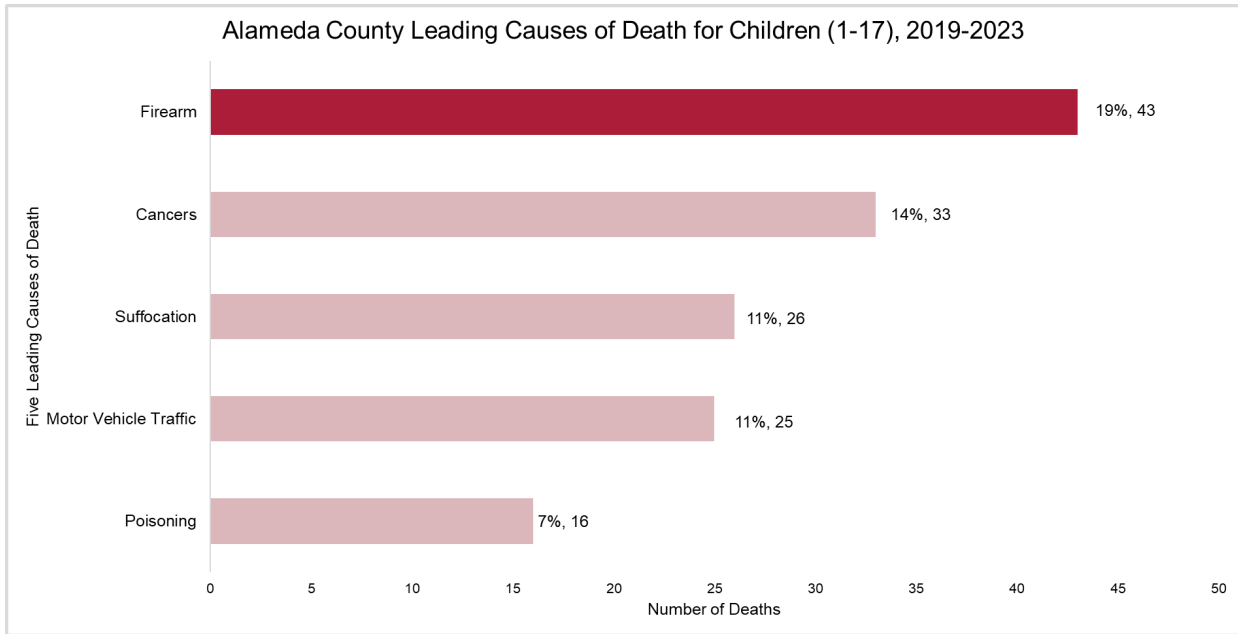
### B. Gun Violence Among Children and Transition-Aged Youth

Gun violence impacts the health and well-being of children and youth in Alameda County. Firearms account for more deaths among children<sup>iii</sup> (ages 1-17) and transition-aged youth (ages 18-24) in the county than any other disease or injury. Each year roughly 9 children and 28 transition-aged youth in the county die by firearm. That means that a young person living in Alameda County is killed by a firearm, on average, every 10 days.

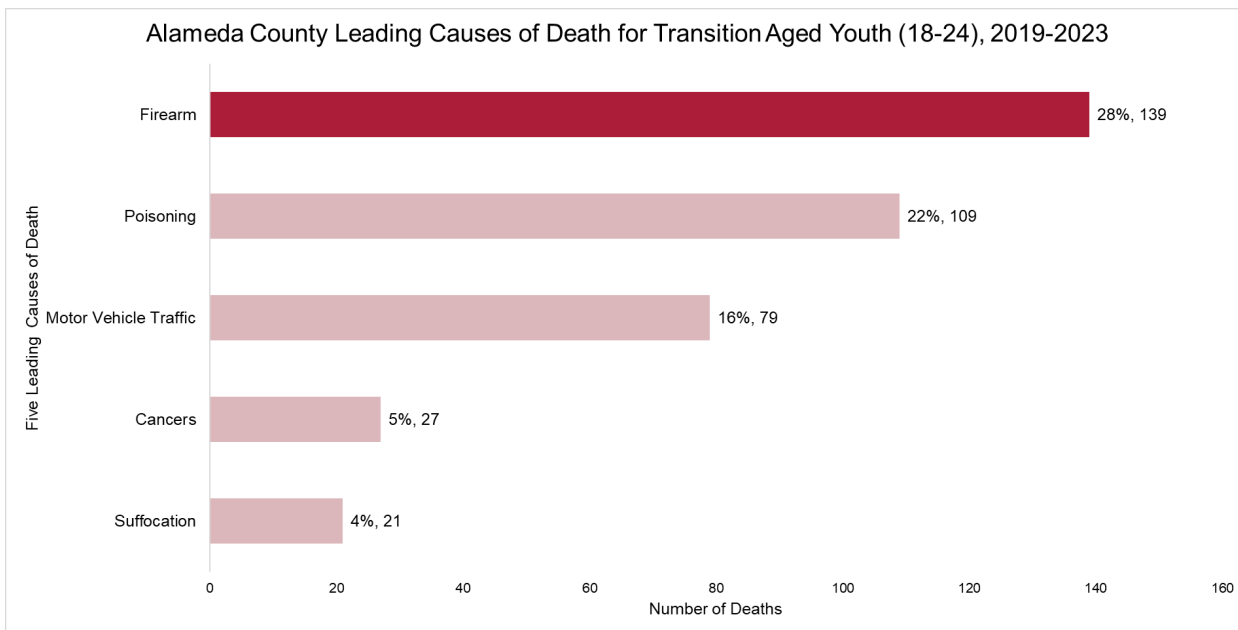
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<sup>iii</sup> Infants under the age of one were excluded from this analysis as they are at unique risk for age-specific causes of death, including perinatal period deaths and congenital anomalies. Fortunately, from 2014 to 2023 there were no firearm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

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*\*In addition to the 5 leading causes depicted in the graph, there were 85 children who died of all other causes of death combined.*

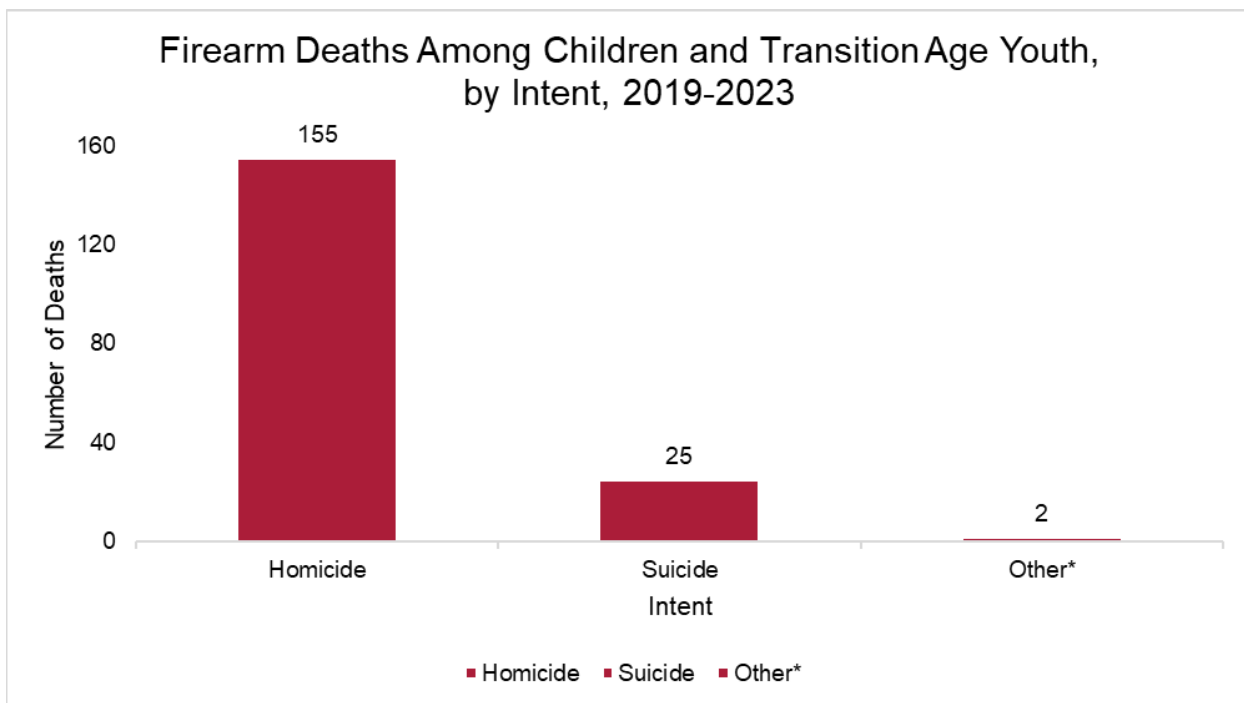


*\* In addition to the 5 leading causes depicted in the graph, there were 126 children who died of all other causes of death combined.*

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

### Firearm Deaths Among Young People by Intent

Eighty-four percent of firearm deaths among children and youth are homicides, followed by suicide at 14%. Although unintentional firearm deaths make up a small proportion of overall deaths, their impact is devastating when these deaths occur. Far too often, children gain access to unsecured firearms and accidentally shoot themselves or a friend. While most of these accidental shootings are not lethal, they often result in serious injury. On average, each year in Alameda County there are 7 emergency room visits and 5 hospitalizations for unintentional firearm injuries among children under 18.<sup>56</sup>



*\*Other category includes unintentional injury, undetermined intent and police-involved shooting*

### Gun Violence Inequities Among Young People

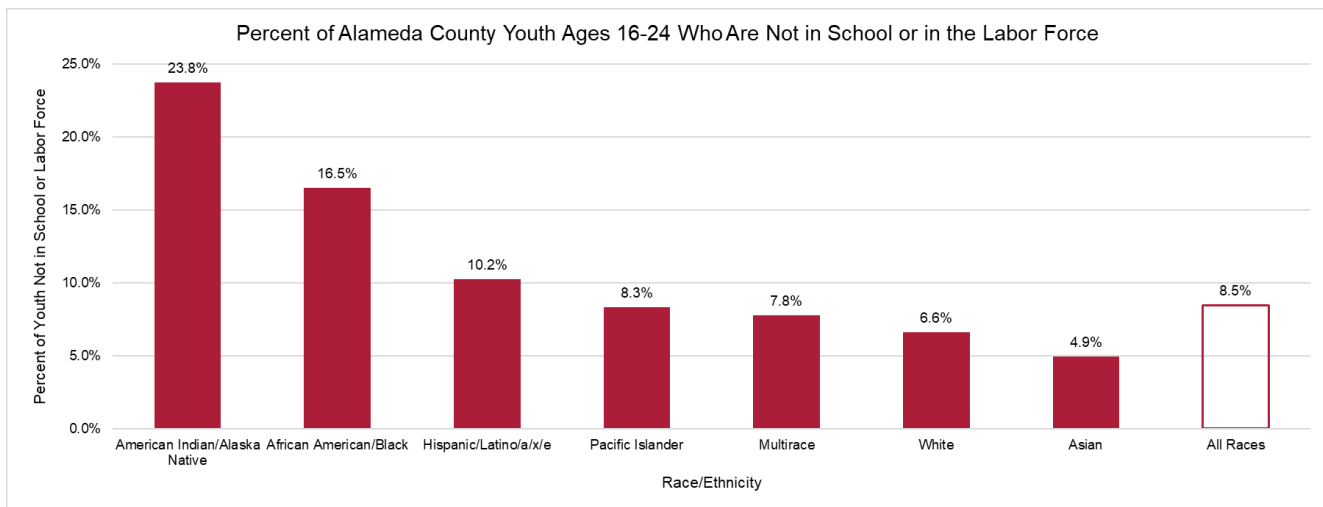
Structural inequities in poverty, housing, and education drive stark racial and ethnic disparities in firearm violence, particularly among children and youth in Alameda County.<sup>57,58,59</sup> As a result, African American/Black, and Hispanic/Latino young people in the county are disproportionately impacted by firearm violence.

The socioeconomic disparities in Alameda County by race and ethnicity are most pronounced among children and transition-aged youth. Twenty-seven percent of all Black children and youth ages 0-24 live in poverty, and poverty rates among American

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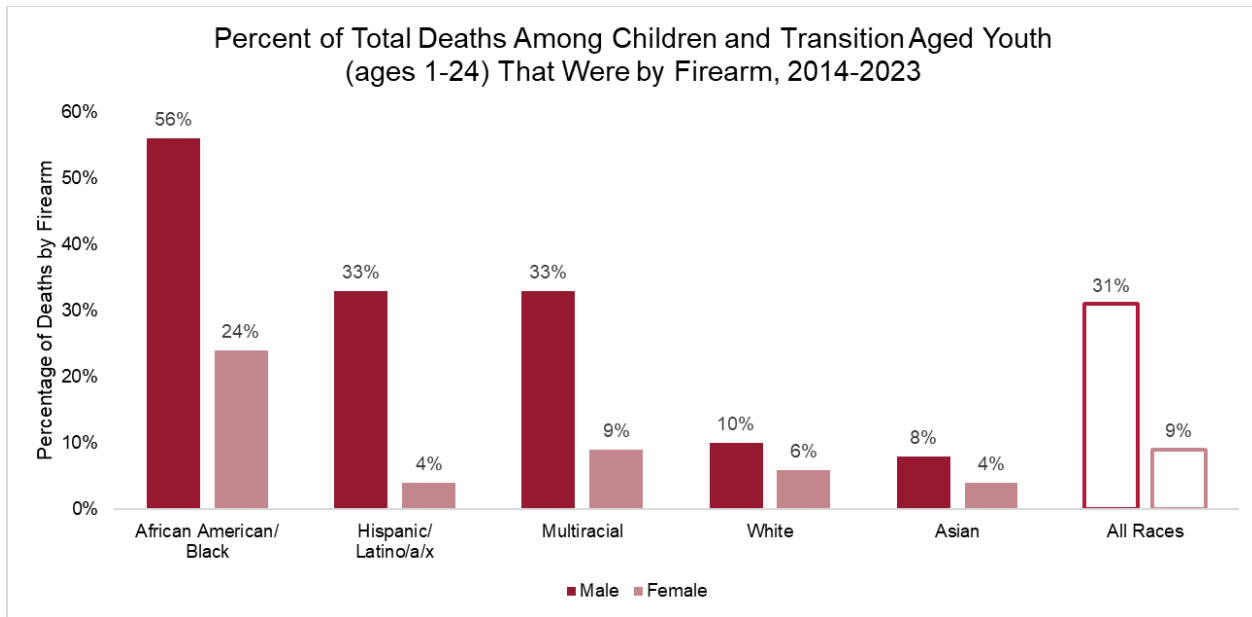
Indian, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latino young people remain at levels far above their white peers. Many of these young people live in households burdened by high rents and low wages. For example, among households that rent, 60% of Black young residents live in households where 30% or more of the household income is spent on rent alone. As a result of limited housing and high rents, large numbers of young residents, particularly Hispanic or Latino residents, are often displaced from their homes or forced to live in overcrowded housing at rates far higher than their White counterparts.<sup>60</sup>

These socioeconomic factors carry over to disparities in economic opportunity. Large proportions of racial and ethnic minority youth in the County are not in school and are out of work. Among youth ages 16 to 24, 24% of American Indian/Alaska native, 17% of African American/Black, and 10% of Hispanic/Latino youth were neither employed nor in school, compared to just 7% of white youth.



As a result of these disparities, it appears that the same racial and ethnic groups are disproportionately burdened by firearm violence. Guns account for more than half of all the deaths that occur among Black males ages 1 to 24, and one third of all Hispanic/Latino youth deaths. Black females, ages 1 to 24 are also disproportionately burdened with firearms accounting for nearly one quarter of all deaths that occur among this group. Addressing these stark racial disparities in child and youth deaths is essential to achieving equitable outcomes for all Alameda County residents.

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence



\*\*Pacific Islander and American Indian young people were excluded from this graph because of the number of small overall deaths that occurred among these populations during this period. However, these groups appear to have high proportion of firearm deaths.

### Mass Casualty Gun Violence and Its Impact on Children

This report does not specifically focus on mass casualty gun violence, and mass shootings are far from the most common form of gun violence. However, mass shootings have become an all-too-common occurrence in the United States and Alameda County, and they have a significant impact on children. ACDAO does not seek to take focus away from more common forms of gun violence. It must also be acknowledged that mass shootings occur and their particular impact on children is an important topic to address.

Mass shooting is defined as any incident in which four or more people are shot and wounded or killed, excluding the shooter.<sup>61</sup> In the eight years between 2015 and 2022, over 19,000 people were shot and killed or wounded in the United States in a mass shooting.<sup>62</sup> The reach of each mass shooting stretches far beyond those killed and wounded, harming the well-being of survivors, their families, and entire communities.

Mass shootings represent less than 1% of gun violence and just 5% of shootings resulting in multiple deaths; however, when a mass shooting occurs, it dominates media coverage and public interest.<sup>63</sup> School mass shootings, in particular, receive significant media coverage.

The majority of shootings with fewer than four multiple deaths result from community violence and typically take place in public settings among people who know each other,



and they disproportionately impact communities of color.<sup>64</sup> In contrast, mass shootings are commonly perceived as random and public acts of violence. However, since 2015, at least 46% of mass shootings involve the shooting of current or former family members or intimate partners, and two-thirds resulted in the death of at least one child or teen.<sup>65</sup>

As a subset of mass shootings, mass shootings that take place at schools also necessarily have significant impact on children. Three of the ten deadliest incidents of mass shootings in the last eight years took place at schools.<sup>66</sup> In 2023 there were at least 158 incidents of gunfire on school grounds, resulting in 45 deaths and 106 injuries nationally, and as of publishing this report, the numbers have risen for 2024.<sup>67</sup> In 2023, there were at least 9 incidents of gunfire on school grounds in California, resulting in 1 death and 4 injuries. Gunfire on school grounds occurs most often at schools with a high proportion of students of color—disproportionately affecting Black students.<sup>68</sup>

In September 2022, Alameda County faced the grim reality of mass and school shootings. One person was killed and five wounded from gun violence that occurred at Rusdale Newcomer High School on the Kings Estates School Complex in Oakland, California. This event left the community reeling, underscored the pervasive issue of gun violence in educational settings, and highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive measures to enhance school safety and address the root causes of such tragedies. The aftermath saw a concerted effort from local authorities, educators, and community leaders to provide support for victims, implement preventive strategies, and foster a dialogue on gun control and mental health resources.

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence



*On February 23, 2024 District Attorney Pamela Y. Price met with students and staff at Rudsdale Newcomer High School as part of their Black History Month celebration and toured the David Sakurai Peace Garden created to memorialize the school carpenter who died on November 17, 2022 from his injuries suffered in a mass shooting at the school.*

### **Mental and Emotional Effects of Gun Violence**

The impacts of gun violence among children and youth go far beyond those who are shot and killed. For every young person who is killed by a firearm, five more are wounded. Each year, an average of 114 young people (ages 0-24) visit the emergency rooms for gunshot wounds, and an additional 83 are hospitalized.<sup>69</sup> These injuries have a profound and often lifelong physical impact. Even after physical wounds heal, psychological trauma remains which, untreated, can lead to depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), stunted emotional development, and anti-social behavior. Parents or caregivers are also adversely impacted by child and youth gun violence. Many face the devastation of burying their children or managing long-term care for a child injured by gunfire. This emotional toll impacts their ability to lead otherwise healthy, productive lives untouched by gun violence.

Gun violence among young Alameda County residents also has cascading effects on families and communities. Children who live in neighborhoods with high levels of gun violence often experience repeated trauma of hearing gunshots, witnessing shootings, or losing loved ones. These adverse childhood experiences caused by gun violence are linked to poor psychological, emotional, and physical health across the lifespan. Entire communities suffer when the life of a young person—a friend, classmate, child, or

neighbor—is cut short by gun violence leading to collective grief and a diminished sense of safety for all residents.

Moreover, when schools are not safe from gun violence, entire generations of Alameda County children are affected. While schools remain one of the least likely places for shootings to occur and children face higher risk of gun violence within their families and neighborhoods, the threat of mass shooting and exposure to gun violence has an impact on the psychological and mental well-being of children and teens and affects their school performance, among other factors.

### **Recommendations - Addressing Gun Violence Among Children and Transition-Aged Youth**

ACDAO is dedicated to addressing the crisis of gun violence among children and transition-aged youth through programs and policy. ACDAO recognizes the need for the following action items in Alameda County:

- 1) Preventing children from gaining access to unsecured firearms through awareness campaigns and through enforcing safe firearm storage laws that require firearms to be locked when not in use.
- 2) Providing culturally responsive support and services to children and youth exposed to gun violence and other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), helping them heal and thrive.
- 3) Offering education, jobs readiness and behavioral health services for youth that have become disconnected from school and employment, creating pathways to stability and success.
- 4) Supporting gun regulation designed to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people—this topic is addressed in depth in Part II of this report.

### C. Domestic Violence Involving Guns

Domestic violence, defined as physical, sexual or psychological abuse carried out by a current or former romantic partner, a cohabitant, or family member, has widespread health impacts, particularly on women. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a subset of domestic violence among current or former romantic partners. Nationally, one in three women experience some form of domestic violence over their lifetime with higher levels experienced among racial and ethnic minorities, as well as transgender and LGBTQ+ individuals.<sup>70</sup> Patriarchal systems, sexism, and stigma against LGBTQ+ individuals contribute to domestic violence by reinforcing power imbalances, marginalizing survivors, and discouraging them from seeking help or accessing resources.<sup>71,72</sup>

#### Firearm Access and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence and firearm access are a lethal combination. Far too often abusers with access to firearms kill. Research shows that whether the abuser has access to a firearm is one of the strongest predictors of domestic violence turning lethal. Nationally, firearms are used in 50% of these intimate partner violence related homicides.<sup>73</sup> When an abuser has access to a firearm, women are five times more likely to be killed by their abusive partner.<sup>74</sup>

Firearms inflict enormous harm even when a gun isn't fired. Abusers often use the mere presence of a gun to threaten, intimidate and terrorize causing psychological harm to survivors.<sup>75</sup> The impact of intimate partner violence carried out by firearm also extends beyond the victim. Many intimate partner homicides are connected to shootings of family members, or co-workers, and to mass shootings, often followed by the perpetrator's suicide. Firearm access in domestic violence situations both heightens the risk of homicide for the victim and increases the risk of mass violence to families and communities.<sup>76</sup>

#### Domestic Violence Homicides

In its most severe form, domestic violence can result in a homicide, especially when an abuser has access to a firearm. Domestic violence homicides often go under-reported because the homicide is unsolved, or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is unknown.<sup>77</sup> This is a challenge in determining how frequent domestic violence homicides occur, and what proportion of overall homicides are linked to domestic violence. Research suggests that nationally, half of female homicide victims are killed by a current or former male intimate partner.<sup>78</sup> Pregnant and postpartum women are also at high risk for domestic violence homicides; in fact, homicide is the leading cause of death among this population.<sup>79</sup>

### Disproportionately Impacted Populations

Historically marginalized individuals are at greater risk for domestic violence homicides. Black and American Indian/Alaska Native females, in particular, experience disproportionately high rates of domestic violence homicides. For example, one study found that Black females accounted for roughly 30% of all intimate partner homicides nationally, but only made up about 15% of the female population.<sup>80</sup> People who are LGBTQ+ also face elevated risks of intimate partner violence homicides.<sup>81</sup> Biases within the legal and healthcare systems can contribute to overlooking and neglecting the experiences of these vulnerable populations. Instances of domestic violence among these populations may not be recognized. When domestic violence is identified, supports may not be provided in a culturally appropriate manner.<sup>82</sup> As a result, interventions and survivor support that could prevent abusive relationships from escalating into lethal violence are less accessible to these residents.

### Identifying Domestic Violence in Alameda County

While it is difficult to identify homicides related to domestic violence with certainty, Alameda County has a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) – a team of clinicians, service providers, and county employees in the Public Health Department and the District Attorney's office. The DVFRT is tasked with identifying suspected cases of domestic violence deaths that occur in the county. From 2017 to 2022, the DVFRT identified 39 domestic violence homicides in Alameda County. Twenty-six of these victims were females, and 46% of domestic violence homicides were by firearm.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to domestic violence homicides identified by the DVFRT, the California Department of Justice records the number of 911 calls for domestic violence that occurred in Alameda County. In 2023, they reported 65 calls for domestic violence involving a firearm. The number of domestic violence calls involving a firearm grew during the pandemic, increasing 76% from 37 calls in 2019.<sup>84</sup>

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

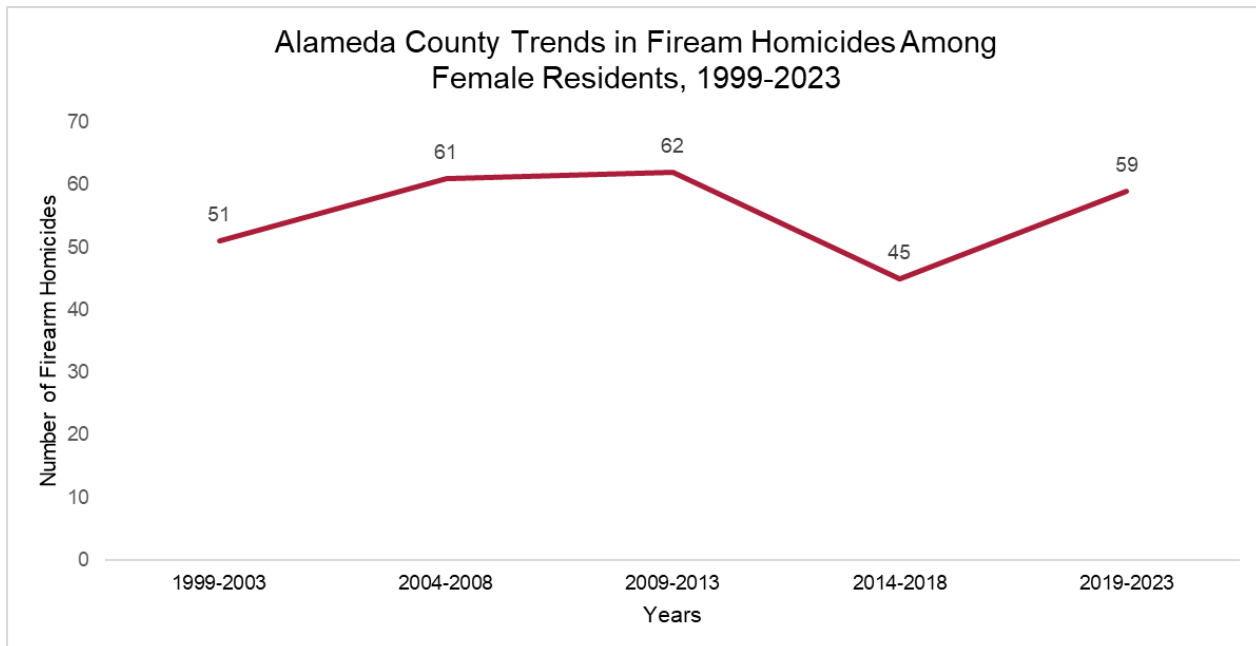
## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

### A More Complete Picture of Female Domestic Violence Homicides in Alameda County

Examining trends of female firearm homicide victims in the county can provide a more complete picture of domestic violence in the county, since research indicates that around half of all female homicides are domestic violence related. In Alameda County, 59 females died by gun homicide from 2019 to 2023, suggesting that roughly 30 females were killed in domestic violence incidents over this five-year time.

The gun homicide rate among females has risen in recent years (2019-2023) increasing 21% from the rate during the previous five years (2014-2018). This rise may be due to a disruption of services for domestic violence survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to the social and economic tensions caused by the pandemic. The current level of female gun homicide in Alameda County, while higher than pre-pandemic, is comparable to the levels from 2009-2013, in the aftermath of the Great Recession. Research shows that economic stressors, including recessions, are linked to higher levels of domestic violence.<sup>85</sup>

Female gun homicide data from Alameda County also illustrates racial and ethnic disparities in victimization. Fifty-six percent of all female gun homicide victims from 2019-2023 were Black, even though Black females represent only 10% of the county's female population. This means that gun homicide rate for Black females was 5 times higher than the overall rate for females in the county.<sup>86</sup>



### Recommendations - Addressing Domestic Violence and Guns in Alameda County

Addressing the intersection of domestic violence and firearms in Alameda County is vital to ensuring that all residents feel safe and secure. The following recommendations are offered to support reduced domestic and gender-based violence and violence against transgender and LGBTQ+ individuals, and to promote equity and wellbeing for all residents.

- 1) Enhancing data collection through Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT), including reducing underreporting. The formation of the Alameda County DVFRT is an important step in ensuring that domestic violence homicides are accurately accounted for, so agencies can identify and address system gaps to increase supports to survivors of domestic violence. Alameda County government is committed to improving data collection and dissemination of data from these reviews to county stakeholders to inform policy and programs.
- 2) Educating the public about protection orders, including Domestic Violence Restraining Orders, and Gun Violence Restraining Orders, both of which prohibit an abuser or unstable person from accessing a firearm. More information on strategies to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people is addressed in Part II of this report.
- 3) Ensuring the immediate relinquishment of firearms after restraining orders are issued. This topic is addressed in section II of this report.
- 4) Bolstering services and resources to victims of domestic violence with a special focus on children who witness or are subjected to domestic violence. This includes a healthcare and legal system that identifies and responds—in a culturally appropriate manner—to signs of abuse, assesses the abuser's access to firearms, develops a safety plan for survivors, and supports survivors in applying for victim compensation and other supportive services. It also includes helping survivors leave abusive relationships and secure stable housing and employment so they can thrive.
- 5) Training law enforcement on tactics to improve their response to domestic violence calls, including how to de-escalate such situations and increase their support for victims of domestic violence and encouraging greater diligence in timely reporting domestic violence related homicides to the DVFRT.

### D. Research on the Contribution of Inequity to Gun Violence

Research reveals a complex and deeply rooted connection between inequities and violence. Across Alameda County, historical and present-day injustices including systemic racism, segregation, and discriminatory housing policies like redlining have contributed to disinvestment and socioeconomic injustices among communities living in poverty and communities of color.<sup>87</sup> In Alameda County, this association is clear; individuals living in neighborhoods with the highest poverty levels are 12 times more likely to die by homicide than those who live in the lowest poverty neighborhoods.<sup>88</sup> Black residents have a gun homicide rate 33 times that of their white counterparts.<sup>89</sup> Inequitable conditions contribute to violence, especially in concentrated areas where people have fewer economic, educational, and social mobility opportunities. Over time, the impact of these inequities accumulates, creating a cycle of trauma and hardship that contribute to ongoing violence in affected communities.

#### How Inequities Contribute to Violence



Inequities are systemic differences in opportunities and resources to achieve for optimal health and well-being. These differences between groups lead to unfair, unjust, and avoidable outcomes.<sup>90,91</sup> Inequities create conditions that increase the likelihood of violence and can shape individuals' lives through repeated exposures to negative experiences and trauma, such as gun violence. These repeated exposures, also known as toxic stressors, accumulate over time and perpetuate a cycle of harm within communities. Below are ways in which inequities contribute to violence, often intersecting and compounding one another to shape the lived experiences of individuals and communities:



### *Economic and socioeconomic status:*

Income inequality, poverty, and a lack of economic opportunities present ongoing challenges in addressing gun violence. Without access to financial resources and employment, individuals may feel hopeless in gaining economic stability and become desperate to support themselves and their families. This can lead individuals to engage in illicit and harmful behavior, including gun violence.<sup>92</sup>

### *Housing and built environment:*

Poor housing conditions overcrowded living spaces, and inadequate public infrastructure can contribute to an environment where violence is likely to occur. In these neighborhood environments, high-stress levels may contribute to more escalations involving firearms. Research also demonstrates a relationship between blighted properties, vacant lots, and violence, suggesting that improving and maintaining these spaces can help deter gun violence.<sup>93,94</sup>

### *Health and Access to Care:*

Limited access to care, including mental health and preventative services, adds another layer of risk for communities already burdened by inequities. Inadequate access to care services may contribute to the perpetuation of chronic conditions, untreated mental health needs, and increased stress levels. When health needs go unmet, individuals are more likely to experience crises that can lead to violent outcomes. This gap in healthcare access amplifies the challenges in under-resourced areas, creating conditions that can foster violence within these communities. Gun violence also imposes heavy costs on low-income communities including high medical expenses and strained healthcare systems, perpetuating a cycle of worsened health outcomes, trauma, and poverty.<sup>95</sup>

### *Education:*

When educational opportunities are unevenly distributed, it perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage among children, youth, and young adults. Schools in impoverished areas often lack the resources to adequately prepare students for the future. This can lead to higher dropout rates and a greater likelihood of involvement in violent behavior.<sup>96</sup> Education is a critical factor in breaking the cycle of violence, yet inequitable access to education resources continues to hinder progress.

### *Justice and policing:*

Inequitable policing practices and the unequal application of justice exacerbate tensions within communities. When residents do not trust formal channels of justice, they are more likely to resolve conflicts through informal means, such as

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

retaliatory violence. Lack of trust can lead individuals to handle disputes on their own, often escalating situations that might otherwise be peacefully resolved. This pattern is especially impactful in communities where law enforcement has a history of misconduct or bias, further straining relationships and widening the gap between law enforcement and the people they serve. When police are unable to solve violent crimes when responding to residents, it fosters an environment for “vigilante justice” that may also lead to increased gun violence.

### Recommendations - Addressing Inequities that Contribute to Violence

Addressing the root causes of violence in Alameda County requires a cross-sectoral approach that focuses on the underlying injustices and inequities that contribute to violence.

Strategies include:

- Addressing the ongoing impacts of historically discriminatory policies.
- Increasing economic investment in under-resourced communities.
- Improving access to quality education and healthcare.
- Ensuring equitable law enforcement practices.

Social policies, that provide all families with the resources to thrive can help address the wealth inequities caused by discriminatory policies. Likewise, increasing investment in public services for children and youth can ensure all young people, particularly those that grow up in poverty or are exposed to adverse childhood experiences gain the supports that they need. Built environment and housing policies must also be reimaged to provide safe, supportive environments for all Alameda County residents.

Addressing structural inequities can disrupt the cycles of trauma and hardship, ultimately reducing gun violence and fostering healthier, more empowered communities.

## E. Community Violence Intervention

Community Violence Intervention (CVI) strategies can support those impacted by structural inequities and violence. CVI refers to evidence-informed strategies designed to reduce violence that occurs in communities, often in public spaces, by focusing on individuals most at risk of engaging in or being a victim of gun violence.<sup>97</sup> These strategies can provide trauma-informed care and healing-centered engagement to help those impacted by violence.<sup>98</sup> Using a public health approach, CVI focuses on

prevention and intervention efforts within communities that disrupt conflicts before they escalate and help individuals heal.

CVI takes on different forms, offering a variety of approaches to meet the specific needs of individuals and communities impacted by violence, systemic inequities, and trauma.<sup>99</sup> Core components of CVI include but are not limited to:

- **Trauma-Informed Care:** CVI strategies may incorporate a trauma-informed lens by addressing the underlying and/or intergenerational traumas caused by gun violence that affect individuals and communities. These approaches help individuals process their emotional reactions to distressing events and the influence of those reactions on behaviors while offering healthier ways to handle future challenges.
- **Healing-Centered Engagement:** In addition to addressing past trauma, healing-centered engagement focuses on empowering individuals to foster their strengths and actively participate in their own healing process. Culturally relevant healing circles are one example in which individuals come together to share experiences, address personal and collective traumas, and foster a sense of connection and community healing.<sup>100</sup>
- **Credible Messengers:** Credible messengers are CVI workers who share lived experiences with individuals at-risk. These shared experiences include growing up in communities impacted by violence and sometimes being caught in cycles of violence themselves. This allows credible messengers to build trust and credibility with individuals at-risk for violence, enabling them to be more responsive to individuals' needs. Credible messengers may incorporate trauma-informed care, healing-centered engagement, and other supportive strategies to address the specific needs within a community.

CVI models vary, adapting to the unique needs of each community. Key models of CVI include, but are not limited to:

- **Street Outreach:** Street outreach involves place-based engagement, often daily in neighborhoods where gun violence is most concentrated. Credible messengers build trust with individuals at-risk in these communities through consistent presence and support. This approach allows credible messengers to stay deeply connected to local residents and be knowledgeable of ongoing community tensions.
- **Violence Interruption:** Violence interruption is often a core component of CVI that focuses on preventing real-time acts of gun violence. Credible messengers use their knowledge of community dynamics and personal relationships to step in

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

before violence occurs. By interrupting violence at its source, these workers help prevent retaliatory cycles of harm and provide individuals with alternative ways to resolve disputes.

- **Conflict Mediation:** Conflict mediation focuses on de-escalating disputes before they lead to initial or retaliatory gun violence. Credible messengers with deep community ties, intervene in real-time, using their knowledge of local dynamics and relationships to de-escalate conflicts between rival gangs/groups or individuals involved in ongoing disputes. Credible messengers may also provide long-term conflict mediation, often involving friends and family members to address underlying tensions and foster lasting peace.
- **Life Coaching:** Life coaching within CVI programs provides individuals at-risk with personalized support to navigate challenges and set goals for their future. Life Coaches, which may include credible messengers, check in regularly with individuals to offer guidance and connections to resources like employment, education, and justice-system navigation support. Long-term, the goal is to help individuals build positive life skills and work toward a future free from violence.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** CBT is a personalized approach to help individuals at-risk with identifying and changing harmful thought patterns that contribute to violence. By developing skills to manage emotions and navigate difficult situations, individuals at-risk are better equipped to engage in positive, non-violent behavior. CBT is often complemented by wraparound supports, such as access to mental health services and housing assistance, to promote long-term positive outcomes and fill critical gaps in services.
- **Improvements to Built Environment:** Built environment strategies complement other CVI interventions by addressing the physical environment where violence concentrates and community-level factors that contribute to violence. Efforts such as transforming vacant lots into green spaces and remediating blight can transform neglected areas where violence often occurs into safer spaces where community resources can be more easily accessed by individuals at-risk, families, and communities.

### CVI Work in Alameda County

Community-based service providers in Alameda County have developed innovative CVI programs which build on one another to create a more cohesive, violence prevention ecosystem. These efforts have become a national model for jurisdictions working to reduce violence. Below are examples of some of the impactful CVI programs in Alameda County.

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### *Community-Based Violence Intervention*

In Alameda County, several community-based organizations focus on neighborhoods with high levels of violence, identifying and working directly with individuals who are most at-risk in their neighborhoods. Through models including violence interruption, street outreach, and life coaching, these community-led efforts maintain a consistent presence, addressing conflicts where they arise and working to prevent gun violence before it escalates.

### *Hospital-Based Violence Intervention*

Hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) engage victims of gun violence at a critical moment – immediately after an injury. CVI workers meet with victims in the hospital, offering support and connections to services that can help prevent re-injury and retaliation. This timely intervention provides an opportunity to guide individuals away from cycles of violence and toward healing and recovery. In Alameda County, Youth ALIVE!'s *Caught in the Crossfire* program provides comprehensive, trauma-informed support to victims, helping them navigate their recovery and reduce the likelihood of further violence. Founded in 1993, Caught in the Crossfire is the nation's first HVIP, marking a significant milestone in the field of violence prevention.

### *Group Violence Intervention*

These interventions involve collaboration between public safety and community leaders, community-based organizations, service providers, local/county agencies, and law enforcement to create cross-sector partnerships aimed at addressing gun violence. Through coordinated efforts, these partnerships can lead to reductions in gun violence. In response to community members' demands to address gun violence, Oakland Ceasefire began implementation in 2012. As a group violence intervention and partnership-based strategy, Oakland Ceasefire seeks to reduce gang/group-related shootings and homicides, lower recidivism and incarceration rates, and strengthen police-community relations.<sup>101</sup> The program identifies and engages a small number of individuals actively involved in gun violence. These individuals are notified by public safety and community leaders that continued involvement in violence will lead to accountability and consequences. Simultaneously, they are offered wraparound CVI support services from community-based organizations and city agencies to help them change their behavior and live healthier, peaceful lives.

## **Recommendations-CVI Best Practices within Alameda County**

Continuous improvement is essential to effective CVI, ensuring that strategies acknowledge challenges and evolve to meet the changing needs of communities

## Public Health Impact of Gun Violence

impacted by violence. To strengthen and expand existing CVI work in Alameda County, future efforts should include the following:

- Establishing consistent and sustainable funding for CVI programs to maintain and improve services, ensuring long-term impact and stability.
- Expanding timely wraparound support to individuals at-risk by addressing critical needs such as housing, employment, mental health, and education to reduce the likelihood of violence.
- Supporting the well-being of frontline staff, including credible messengers, by addressing burnout and providing trauma support.<sup>102</sup>
- Ensuring adequate staffing and capacity support within CVI programs to improve CVI effectiveness and expand healing-centered approaches that address both individual and collective trauma.
- Increasing coordination and data sharing among service providers within Alameda County and nearby regions to ensure a unified approach to addressing gun violence across cities.

The legacy of Alameda County's community-based service providers leading CVI efforts demonstrates a deep sense of pride in being at the forefront of implementing impactful, community-engaged strategies. By continuing to innovate and strengthen CVI efforts, Alameda County has opportunity to further reduce gun violence and foster safer, more connected communities. Ongoing commitment to collaboration and community interventions will be key to ensuring both short and long-term gun violence reduction across Alameda County.

## II. Public Safety Impact of Gun Violence and the Regulation of Firearms

Part I of this report focused on structural factors contributing to gun violence and its impact on communities in Alameda County. Part II of this report examines gun supply in the County and how enforcement of gun laws promotes public safety by reducing the misuse and proliferation of guns in the County. Included is a discussion of the impact of state and municipal gun policy on public safety in the County, as well as policy recommendations designed to disrupt patterns of gun violence and promote public safety, including recommendations to enhance Gun Violence Restraining Orders, Gun Relinquishment enforcement, gun storage and safety measures, and innovations in criminal sentencing.

### A. The Proliferation of Firearms into Alameda County

Gun purchases surged during the economic and social instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, both nationally and in California. Approximately 110,000 Californians purchased a gun in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including 47,000 new gun owners.<sup>103</sup>

As discussed in Section I, access to firearms is concerning as it is associated with elevated risk of gun mortality. Gun violence is correlated with easy access to firearms, especially among those vulnerable to violence. The availability of firearms is a uniquely American problem; the United States has more guns than people.<sup>104</sup> The United States has comparable rates of violent crime to other high-income countries, but a homicide rate 7.5 times higher, driven chiefly by firearm homicides.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, guns are a driver of our nation's high suicide rate, with 90% of gun suicide attempts ending in death.<sup>106</sup>

#### **County Availability of Firearms and Increase in Purchases**

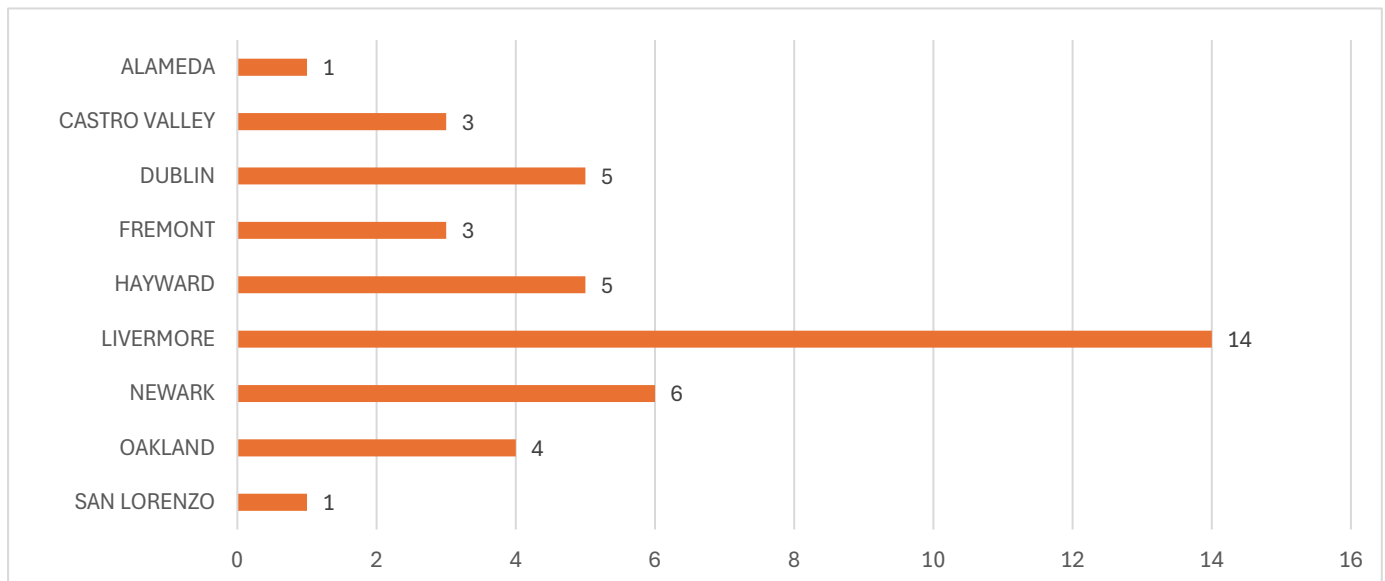
Although the exact percentage of gun-owning adults in Alameda County is unknown, available data suggests that a substantial number of residents own firearms, with recent years showing an increase in purchases. Statewide, an estimated 14% of adults

## Public Safety Impact of Gun Violence

own a firearm.<sup>107</sup> Considering Alameda County's more urban and racially diverse demographic and the data on gun ownership being more prevalent among white rural adults, its legal gun ownership rate is likely slightly lower than the state average.

A wide body of research suggests that over the long run, high levels of firearm purchasing and ownership are linked to increased levels of violence.<sup>108,109</sup> Mirroring statewide and national trends, firearm sales in Alameda County increased 31% from the period prior to the pandemic (2017-2019) to the pandemic peak (2020-2022), with over 65,000 firearms sold from 2020 to 2022.<sup>110</sup> Since reaching a peak in 2020, gun sales in Alameda County appear to be returning to pre-pandemic levels.

The number of licensed firearm dealers has also risen in Alameda County since 2018. According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' 2024 list of Federal Firearms License Dealers (FFL), Alameda County has 42 dealers, up 11% from 2018. The number of licensed dealers is listed by Alameda County cities in the following chart.



Number of Federal Firearms Licensed Dealers in Alameda County

*The data for this graphic was collected from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms - Federal Firearms Listings.*

Regionally within the County, almost half of the firearms licensed dealers are located in two tri-valley suburban cities: Livermore and Dublin. As of January 2024, most firearms licensed dealers in Alameda County are concentrated in the city of Livermore (count = 14), contrary to the cities of Alameda and San Lorenzo that only have 1 firearms



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licensed dealer each. Both Livermore and Dublin experienced growth in dealers since 2018. Livermore added three federally licensed firearms dealers; Dublin added one.

The cities of Oakland and Newark also experienced a significant rise in licensed dealers: Oakland going from zero to four; Newark rising from two to six dealers. Notably, three cities saw their numbers of dealers decrease: San Leandro lost its only dealer; Hayward lost two of seven; and Fremont's numbers more than halved, going from eight to three.

Cities	2018	2024	Difference
Alameda	1	1	0
Castro Valley	3	3	0
Dublin	4	5	1
Fremont	8	3	-5
Hayward	7	5	-2
Livermore	11	14	3
Newark	2	6	4
Oakland	0	4	4
San Leandro	1	0	-1
San Lorenzo	1	1	0
Total	38	42	4

Number of Federal Firearms Licensed Dealers in Alameda, Years 2018 and 2024.

*In 2018, there were 38 federal firearms licensed dealers in Alameda. By January 2024, that number increased to 42 dealers located across the county. To note, the highest increase in firearms dealers occurred in cities such as Newark, Livermore, and Oakland; for which Oakland had no firearms dealers in 2018. The number of firearms licensed dealers decreased in the cities of Fremont, Hayward, and San Leandro; with Fremont having the highest decrease in dealers from 8 to 3. Cities such as Alameda, Castro Valley, and San Lorenzo had no changes in the number of firearms dealers when comparing the two years. The data for this table was collected from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms - Federal Firearms Listings.*

R

### Rise in Unserialized and Unregulated Ghost Guns

In addition to the purchase of guns from licensed dealers, Alameda County recently has been impacted by an evolving gun market that works to evade regulations by selling ghost gun kits.

Ghost guns are guns built or assembled by individuals rather than licensed manufacturers, and they do not contain a serial number. Most often these guns are made from "do-it-yourself" ghost gun kits. Starting around 2019, these kits became widely sold over the web and were able to be purchased by anyone, including convicted felons and minors. By drilling a couple of holes and assembling a few parts, members of the public can gain access to a fully functional firearm within minutes.<sup>111</sup>

Ghost guns pose a serious threat to public safety. In addition to adding to the general circulation of guns in the County, which is generally linked to higher gun violence rates, ghost guns allow people with criminal intent, gun traffickers, and people with mental illness or otherwise prohibited from owning firearms to evade gun laws and easily access untraceable firearms.

The state and federal governments have recently taken action to clamp down on the sale of ghost gun kits—discussion of this regulatory action is discussed further in section D of Part II of this report. Yet, the proliferation of ghost guns over the past five years has contributed to the rise in gun possession and violence in Alameda County.

## B. Crime Guns in Alameda County

Firearms recovered by law enforcement at a crime scene, that were suspected of being used in a crime or were illegally possessed, are classified as 'crime guns.'

The serial numbers from crime guns, if available, are entered into the California Department of Justice Automated Firearms System (AFS) and traced to the last purchase or transfer of the firearm. This data management process allows law enforcement to gain intelligence about who purchased a specific firearm and how the firearm ended up being used in a crime. Crime gun data helps authorities identify gun trafficking patterns and dealers that are potentially out of compliance with gun laws.

From 2021 to 2023, over 5,334 crime guns were recovered in Alameda County and their data was entered into the California Department of Justice's AFS. On average, law enforcement in Alameda County recovered 1 crime gun approximately every 5 hours during this three-year period.<sup>112</sup>

**On average, law enforcement in Alameda County recovered 1  crime gun approximately every 5  hours during this THREE-YEAR period**

Twenty-eight percent (1,476 out of 5,334) of the crime guns recovered in Alameda County from 2021 to 2023 were unserialized guns, meaning that the gun did not have a serial number. The vast majority (85%) of these unserialized guns were ghost guns, while the remaining unserialized guns had defaced or removed serial numbers.<sup>113</sup>

The graph below shows the number of crime guns recovered by city/unincorporated areas in Alameda County, from 2021 to 2023:

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### Crime gun recoveries in Alameda County 2021 to 2023

City of Crime Gun Recovery	Serialized Crime Guns	Unserialized* Crime Guns	Total Crime Guns Recovered	Percent of Crime Guns that were Unserialized
<b>ALAMEDA COUNTY</b>	<b>3,858</b>	<b>1,476</b>	<b>5,334</b>	<b>28%</b>
San Leandro	606	246	852	29%
Oakland	568	238	806	30%
Hayward	564	261	825	32%
Fremont	486	205	691	30%
Livermore	233	44	277	16%
Berkeley	155	63	218	29%
Union City	142	50	192	26%
Dublin	115	40	155	26%
Alameda	113	26	139	19%
Emeryville	111	71	182	39%
Castro Valley	82	35	117	30%
Pleasanton	61	25	86	29%
San Lorenzo	52	30	82	37%
Albany	18	7	25	28%
Newark	6	4	10	40%
Piedmont	2	1	3	33%
Sunol	1	1	2	50%
Rest of County/ Specific location in Alameda County unknown	543	129	672	19%

*85% of these unserialized guns recovered in Alameda County were ghost guns. Source: California Department of Justice*

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### Source Of Serialized Crime Guns

Serialized firearms used in crimes in Alameda County and recovered by law enforcement are purchased locally or from various sources, including other counties and neighboring states. Due to California's strong gun laws, many crime guns recovered in Alameda County were originally purchased out of state and either trafficked or brought in. The Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) reported that in 2022, 48% (16,073) of the crime guns recovered in California and successfully traced were originally purchased outside the state.<sup>114</sup>

Most crime guns recovered and that were originally purchased in California are not new guns, pointing to how increased gun sales can impact crime and gun violence rates years later. For example, the average age of a serialized crime gun recovered in California in 2023 was eight years.<sup>115</sup> Many of these firearms originated from a small number of dealers that operated decades ago and have since closed. For example, in the early 2000s one San Leandro gun dealer—Trader Sports—was the second largest supplier of crime guns in the nation, and 46% of crime guns recovered in Oakland in 2000 were traced back to this one dealer.<sup>116</sup> Although Trader Sports' firearm license was revoked in 2006 and the store was subsequently shut down, a 2012 analysis conducted by the Alameda County District Attorney's Office revealed that a sizable proportion of crime guns recovered in the County were still being traced back to Trader Sports.<sup>117</sup> This illustrates how one out-of-compliance gun dealer can contribute to gun violence for decades.

Over the past two decades, California has implemented a series of policies to tighten gun dealer regulation, enhancing oversight, and accountability. These policies have shut down and/or prevented non-compliant gun dealers from operating in the state and are linked to a reduction in gun trafficking.<sup>118</sup>

### Crime Guns Traced to Dealers in Alameda County

Despite this progress, it remains important to monitor firearm dealers in Alameda County to ensure that they are not, either intentionally or unintentionally, contributing to gun trafficking and violence. As discussed in section A above, since 2018, Alameda County has seen an increase in the number of licensed gun dealers. According to data from the California Department of Justice, a total of 675 crime guns recovered in California from 2021 to 2023 were traced back to gun dealers registered in Alameda County. Of these, 163 guns (approximately 53 each year) were classified as short-time-to-crime guns, meaning they were recovered as crime guns within one year of being sold by an Alameda County dealer. This short time-to-crime metric is used by the ATF to identify guns that were potentially trafficked.

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**Crime guns recovered in California from 2021 to 2023 that were traced back to a sale or transfer made by a firearms dealer in Alameda County.**

<b>Name of Licensed Dealer</b>	<b>City Where Dealer is Registered</b>	<b>Number of Crime Gun Recoveries Traced to Alameda County Dealer</b>	<b>Number of Short Time-to-Crime Recoveries (Crime guns recovered within one year of dealer sale or transfer)</b>	<b>Total Firearm Sales, 2021-2023</b>
<b>Solar Tactical Inc.</b>	Castro Valley	169	76	8,456
<b>Best Net Sales Inc dba Elite Armory</b>	Castro Valley	131	30	8,086
<b>Black Dog Armory</b>	Fremont	39	14	5,991
<b>Solar Tactical Inc.</b>	Livermore	48	13	5,128
<b>J&amp;R Sports Supply Inc</b>	Livermore	50	9	7,215
<b>Security Six</b>	Hayward	21	7	809
<b>Richardson Tactical LLC. (Inactive)</b>	Hayward	21	4	341
<b>Dom's Surplus Inc.</b>	Livermore	18	3	455
<b>UG Imports LLC</b>	Fremont	16	2	4,025
<b>Accurate Arms</b>	Livermore	3	2	1,987
<b>Dick's Sporting Goods, Inc.</b>	Fremont	5	1	0

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<b>DJ Defense Systems</b>	Livermore	2	1	1,339
<b>East Bay Firearms</b>	Livermore	1	1	766
<b>Milpitas Shooting Range Inc</b>	Livermore	121	0	0
<b>Bullseye Castro Valley Gun Shop (inactive)</b>	Castro Valley	15	0	0
<b>Annies Guns</b>	Fremont	8	0	0
<b>Irvington Arms (inactive)</b>	Fremont	3	0	0
<b>Adamson Police Products</b>	Livermore	2	0	1,212
<b>Dick's Sporting Goods, Inc.</b>	Dublin	1	0	0
<b>Dick's Sporting Goods, Inc.</b>	Hayward	1	0	0

*Source: California Department of Justice*

This data on crime guns recovered by dealership is proffered, not with the intent of accusing any specific dealer of misconduct, but to highlight the need for continued monitoring and tracing to initial purchase of crime guns as a vital tool for law enforcement in investigating trafficking patterns and non-compliant dealers.

### Ghost Guns Contributing to Crime in Alameda County

Prior to 2014, ghost guns were made by a small number of gun hobbyists and law enforcement rarely recovered ghost guns at crime scenes. Between 2018 and 2022, however, ghost guns flooded the streets of Oakland facilitated by the growth of online ghost gun kit companies. Often, these guns were purchased by gun traffickers and prohibited people (e.g. convicted felons, minors) and with the explicit intention of skirting California's strong gun laws.<sup>119</sup> Data suggest that many ghost guns were used to carry out violence in Alameda County. In fact, a study of guns recovered by the Oakland Police Department from 2017 to 2021 found that ghost guns were 50% more likely to have been used in violent crimes compared to serialized crime guns that were recovered.<sup>120</sup>

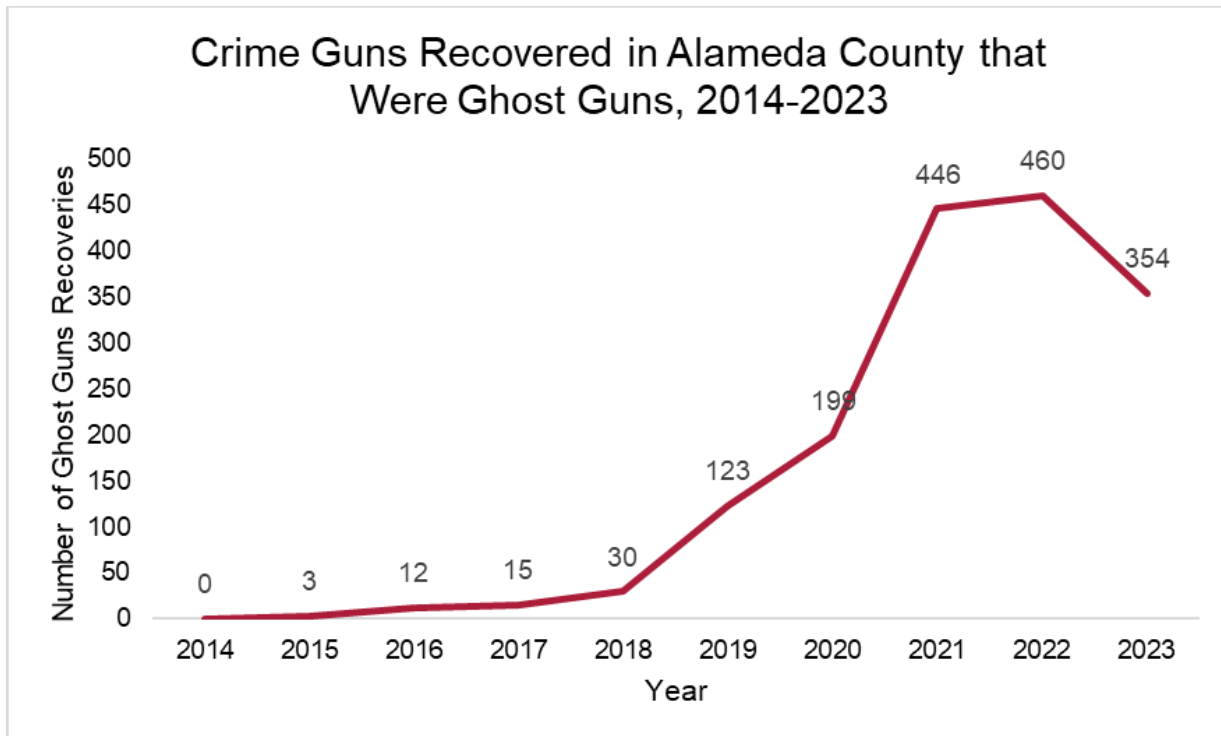
In 2018, there were 30 crime guns recovered in Alameda County that were identified as ghost guns and reported to California Department of Justice. By 2022, that number had grown to 460, a 1,433% increase; roughly 1 out of every 4 guns recovered at crime scenes in Alameda County were ghost guns.

roughly **1 OUT OF EVERY 4** guns  
recovered at crime scenes in Alameda  
County were ghost guns



Fortunately, the rise in ghost gun recoveries appears to be declining from a peak in 2022. From 2022 to 2023 ghost gun recoveries in Alameda County decreased by 23%. This decrease is the result of legislative action taken at the local, state, and federal levels to stop the distribution of unregulated, unserialized gun parts and ghost gun kits.<sup>121</sup> This policy push is discussed further in section D of part II of this report.

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Source: California Department of Justice

### C. Gun Ownership and Storage

For many residents, guns are an important part of American culture and heritage. The United States Supreme Court has ruled that there is a constitutional right, protected under the Second Amendment, for law abiding citizens to own and possess firearms for self-defense. Nonetheless, it is an undeniable fact that legal gun ownership in Alameda County contributes to gun violence.



Public health research consistently shows that having a gun in the home increases the risk by 3-fold that someone in that home will die by suicide and it doubles the risk for

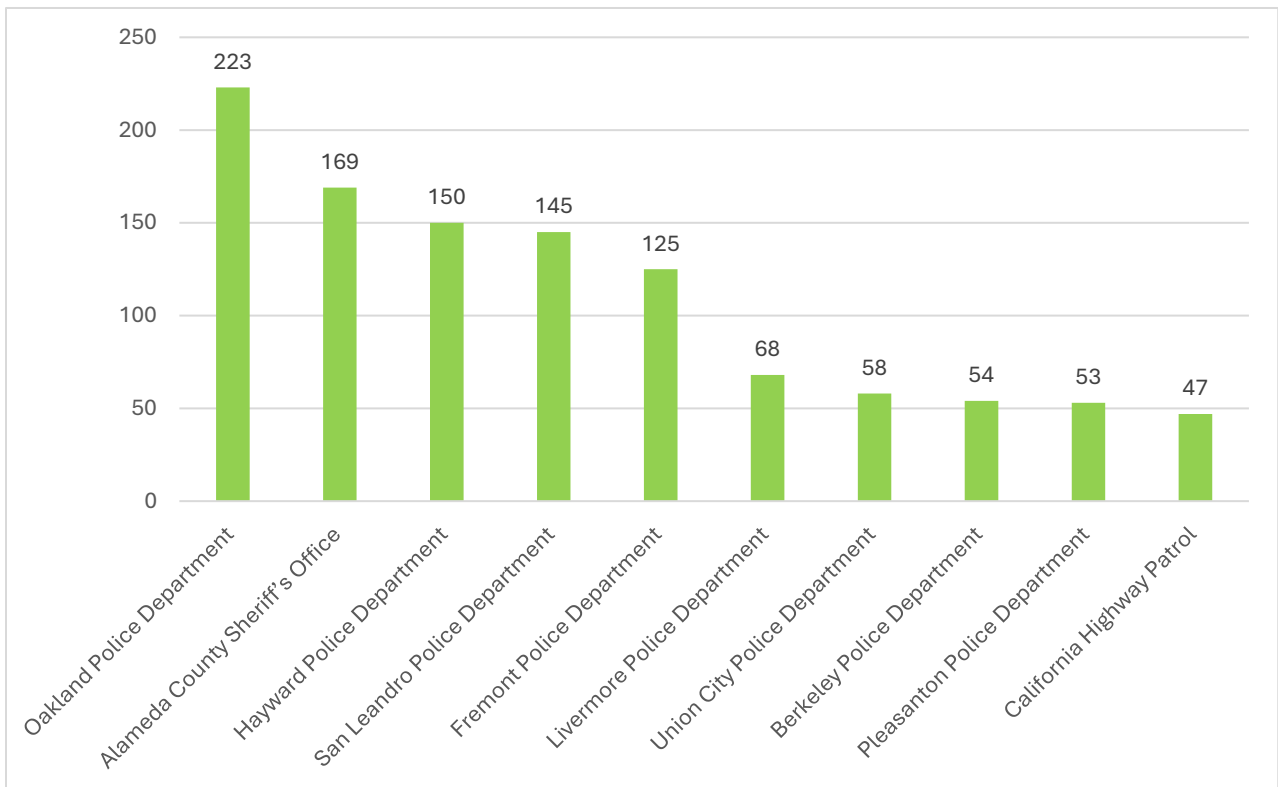


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homicide, often of a family member.<sup>122</sup> Legally purchased guns can also drive gun violence outside of the home. Far too often, legally purchased guns are lost or stolen and end up contributing to community gun violence.

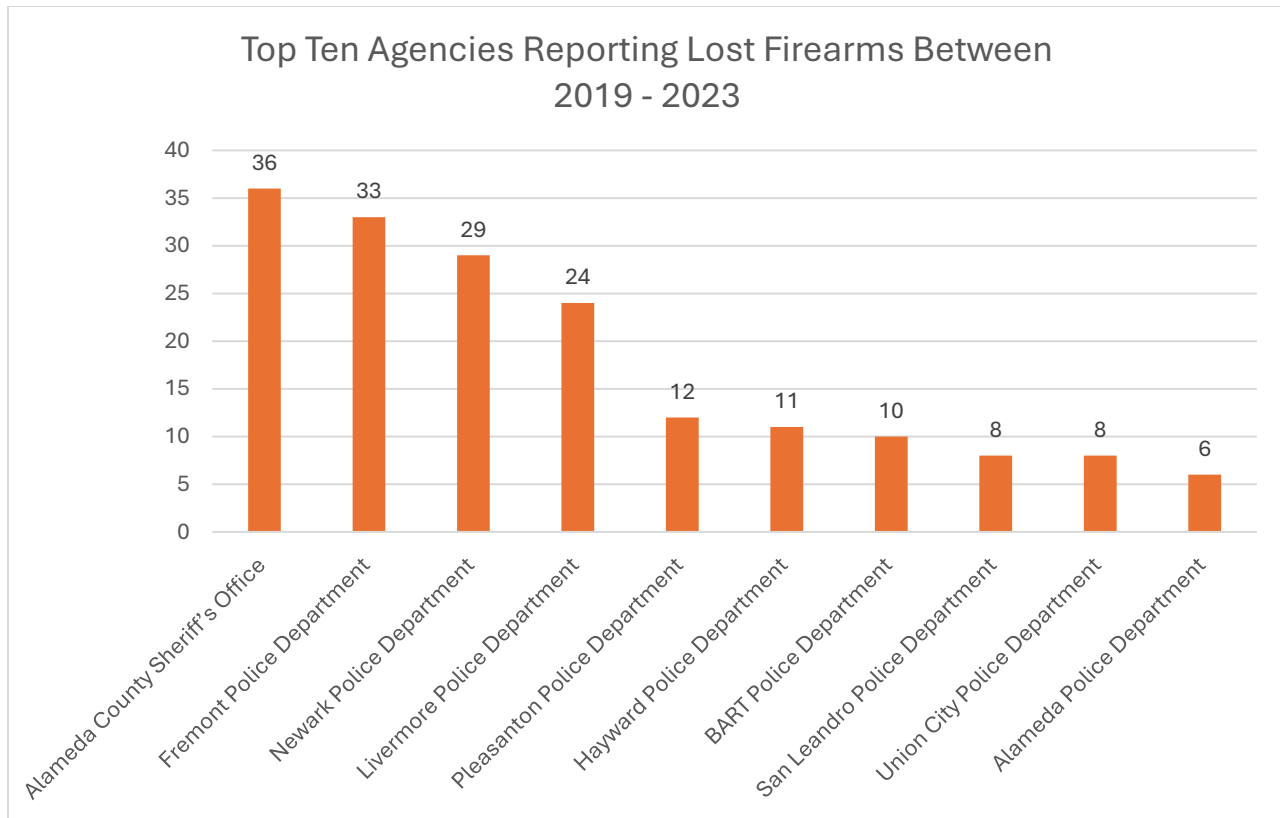
Gun owners who fail to lock up their firearms are susceptible to gun thefts from having their guns unsecured inside the home or within their cars. This issue is pervasive. Nationally an estimated 380,000 guns are stolen each year, with one gun being stolen from a car on average every 9 minutes.<sup>123,124</sup> Alameda County is not exempt from this threat to public safety.

Top Ten Agencies Reporting Stolen Firearms Between 2019 - 2023



Above are the top ten agencies for reporting stolen firearms to the AFS between the years 2019 - 2023. Of these top ten agencies, Oakland Police Department reported the most stolen firearms at 223 entries while California Highway Patrol reported the fewest stolen firearms at 47 entries. The lowest reported number of stolen firearms by a jurisdiction was Piedmont Police Department (5 entries) and is not include in this graph.

## Public Safety Impact of Gun Violence



Above are the top ten agencies for reporting lost firearms to the AFS between the years 2019 - 2023. Of these top ten agencies Alameda County Sheriff's Office reported the most lost firearms at 36 entries while Alameda Police Department reported the fewest lost firearms at 6 entries.

Unsecured firearms also increase the likelihood of accidental injuries. Each year dozens of unintentional gun injuries occur in the county. Tragically, children or young adults gain access to firearms and accidentally shoot themselves or others. Many of these injuries can be avoided with safe storage of both the gun and ammunition. Residents wishing to purchase a gun for the first time should know the risks of firearm ownership and they should know how to mitigate those risks through safe gun storage and handling.

### Firearm Purchasing Requirements

Within California, those wishing to purchase a firearm must first obtain a firearm safety certificate.<sup>125</sup> This requires passing a background check, undergoing firearm safety training, and passing a firearms safety test administered by the California Department of Justice.<sup>126</sup> These safeguards educate new gun owners on how to safely handle and store firearms.<sup>127</sup> California also has a 10-day waiting period to ensure that someone who is in crisis or might make an impulsive decision cannot purchase a gun on the

spot.<sup>128</sup> California's firearm purchasing requirements prevent prohibited individuals or people at risk for violence, from purchasing a firearm.<sup>129</sup> These laws also deter straw purchasers (a person who buys a firearm for someone who is prohibited from purchasing one) and gun traffickers.<sup>130</sup> A growing body of research shows that firearm purchasing requirement laws are associated with large reductions in homicides and suicides.<sup>131,132</sup>

With the passage of the 2023 Gun Violence Prevention and School Safety Act,<sup>133</sup> beginning in July 2024, California imposed an additional excise tax of 11% on the gross receipts from retail sales of firearms, firearm precursor parts and ammunition.<sup>134</sup> The estimated revenue of \$160 million a year will be used to sustain the Gun Violence Prevention and School Safety Fund, and to fund various gun violence prevention, education, research, response, and investigation programs, according to the language of the statute.

### *Safe Storage and Lost and Stolen Reporting Laws*

In addition to gun purchasing laws, California has gun storage requirements aimed at preventing gun theft and unintentional firearm injuries among children.<sup>135</sup> These laws hold people liable if a firearm is left unsecured in a location where a minor is likely to gain access. For example, a parent with children in the home who leaves their firearm on the kitchen table when they go to work could be held liable under California law. California also has safe storage laws that hold gun owners accountable if a prohibited individual, who they know is prohibited from owning a firearm, gains access to their unsecured firearm and causes harm or carries the firearm in public.<sup>136</sup>

Cities across Alameda County have local ordinances that are more stringent than the state's safe storage laws. Many require that all firearms be stored in a locked container or disabled with a trigger lock at all times inside a residence.<sup>137</sup> To ensure that unincorporated areas in Alameda County, such as Castro Valley and San Lorenzo, have similarly strong safe gun storage laws, the Alameda Board of Supervisors passed a similar safe storage law in 2020 which is currently in the process of being strengthened.<sup>138</sup> Together, these laws ensure that Alameda County gun owners lock their firearms when not in use. Research shows that these types of laws are associated with reductions in unintentional child deaths, youth suicides and gun homicides.<sup>139</sup>

### **Reporting Lost and Stolen Firearms**

California state law requires gun owners to report firearms that were lost or stolen to local law enforcement within five days from discovering the loss or theft of the firearm.<sup>140</sup> Beginning July 1, 2026, this law will also apply to finished and unfinished

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frames and receivers.<sup>141</sup> Reporting requirements help authorities respond quickly to gun thefts and potentially identify trafficking networks that steal firearms from the cars and/or homes of residents. These laws also deter straw purchasers or individuals who buy firearms on behalf of prohibited persons from possessing a firearm and transferring the firearm to another. If the firearm is later used in a crime and traced back to the straw purchaser, they cannot retroactively claim that it was lost or stolen. Research shows that lost and stolen firearm reporting laws are associated with a decrease in trafficked guns.<sup>142</sup>

### Carrying Firearms in Public Places

California has many laws that limit the carrying of guns in public spaces. People in Alameda County are prohibited from openly carrying a loaded firearm in public and are generally prohibited from carrying an exposed handgun or long-gun in public, even when the firearm is unloaded.<sup>143</sup> Alameda County residents who would like to carry a firearm in public can apply for a Concealed Carry license with local law enforcement; obtaining this permit requires they meet certain criteria and complete training and psychological testing.<sup>144</sup>

California restricts the carrying of firearms in schools, parks, state or local public buildings, and polling places. These restrictions apply to open carry of firearms and to concealed carry permit holders.<sup>145</sup> Litigation on where concealed carry permit holders can carry a firearm is ongoing.<sup>146</sup> It is incumbent on gun owners in Alameda County to know the laws and stay updated as the laws evolve.



## **Promoting Responsible Gun Ownership**

Alameda County residents who choose to own a firearm have a responsibility to keep themselves, their family, and their community safe by practicing responsible gun ownership. Gun owners are responsible for staying updated with new local and statewide gun laws. They should always store firearms unloaded in a locked container with the ammunition secured in a separate location. Only the firearm owner or other authorized users should have access to the combination or key to access the firearm. Law enforcement agencies also carry the responsibility to facilitate prompt processing of concealed carry permits to minimize the threat to public safety of illegal gun ownership.

Gun owners should also learn to recognize the warning signs when they or a loved one are in crisis. They should develop a safety plan in case someone in their home goes through a hard time and is vulnerable to violence. These plans should include options of temporarily storing their firearm outside of the home with a friend or family members who are not prohibited persons. Gun owners can also sell their firearms to a firearms dealer or ask if a dealer or range owner will hold onto the firearm temporarily. Alameda County law enforcement agencies will also work with those who no longer want their firearms to dispose of them.

ACDAO is committed to educating gun-owning residents about how to minimize the risks of gun ownership through safe firearm storage, as well as sharing information to help owners stay in compliance with state and county laws. Importantly, County agencies can help to educate residents to recognize the signs of suicide or crisis and temporarily limit firearm access during these times.<sup>147</sup>

## **D. Removing Guns from Dangerous People and Situations**

### **California Gun Laws Work and the State and Alameda County Can Do More**

Research shows that higher levels of gun ownership and more permissive gun laws are associated with higher rates of gun violence.<sup>148,149</sup> California's experience proves this point. It is a state leader in passing strong gun laws and in reducing the gun death rate. In fact, in recent years the state ranked as having the strongest gun laws in the country and having one of the lowest gun death rates.<sup>150</sup> Giffords Law Center, a gun violence prevention organization, ranked California first in the nation for its gun laws in 2021.<sup>151</sup> That same year, California had the eighth lowest gun death rate of states in the country—a rate 39% lower than the national rate.<sup>152</sup>

## Public Safety Impact of Gun Violence

While California leads the nation in gun safety laws, gun violence continues. Some barriers to public safety are beyond the control of Alameda County. For example, weak gun laws in neighboring states, such as Arizona—where firearms can be purchased from a private seller without a background check or any vetting process—undermine the impact of California laws. Firearm traffickers can exploit weak gun laws in neighboring states by making bulk purchases of firearms, including assault-style rifles, and selling them illegally to individuals at risk of engaging in violence in Alameda County.

The United State Supreme Court also challenged State gun safety regulation in 2022 in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*, which recognized, for the first time, an individual right to carry a loaded gun in public for self-defense. More consequentially, the Court struck down gun safety laws that rely on local-level individualized, discretionary determination of risk. In response, California lawmakers have adapted by focusing gun safety regulation on enhancing other aspects of the concealed carry application process, such as strengthening background checks, expanding training requirements, and limiting where concealed firearms can be carried. This shift aligns with the *Bruen* ruling, which did not prohibit states from enforcing other non-discretionary requirements, such as background checks or training.

Some barriers to safety are in our control. Alameda County is supporting California State efforts with innovation designed to remove guns from dangerous people and situations. This section of Part II outlines policy strategies employed in the State and County to address gun violence. The next section discusses innovative criminal penalty solutions to addressing gun violence. The last section of Part II provides a list of comprehensive recommendations for furthering public safety and controlling gun violence.

### **Alameda County’s Response to Key State Gun Safety Legislative Trends (2019-2024)**

Alameda County public safety and health partners, as well as the public, should familiarize themselves with the comprehensive State gun safety legislation passed in recent years. A summary of key bills enacted by the legislature impacting Alameda County follows.

#### *Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVROs) and Expanded Gun Relinquishment Duties*

A portfolio of new State laws was enacted to better keep guns out of the hands of people at risk of committing acts of violence. These laws specifically expand restraining order and gun relinquishment laws to effect public safety. California was the first state in the nation to adopt a “red flag law,” which allows courts to issue restraining orders preventing individuals deemed to be a danger to themselves or others from possessing firearms.<sup>153</sup> Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVROs) have been available in California since January 2016. According to research cited by the Office of the Attorney General:

## Alameda County District Attorney's Office

In the first three years of their existence, GVROs were used in 58 cases of threatened mass shootings; in every instance for which data is available, the mass shooting did not occur. Among a study of 379 respondents in GVRO cases, only one later died because of a firearm injury.<sup>154</sup>

New laws like AB 301 (2023) expanded the scope of GVROs, easing use of GVROs as a preventive tool to reduce gun violence, particularly in cases of domestic violence. Specifically, AB 301 allows judges to consider the acquisition of body armor as an important piece of evidence when deciding whether or not to grant a gun violence restraining order. This change to law is significant.

According to The Violence Project, 21 mass shooters have worn tactical gear during their attacks. Most recent incidents include the Buffalo, New York mass shooting and in 2015 the San Bernardino shooting where both the perpetrators wore body armor to prolong their attacks, making it harder for law enforcement to apprehend them. As such, it is vital for judges to recognize the significance of body armor and its use in violent crimes.<sup>155,156,157</sup>

In 2023 and 2024, California enacted new gun relinquishment laws sending a clear message they want law enforcement agencies, prosecuting attorneys, civil and criminal courts, and probation departments to do more to enforce failures to relinquish firearms and ammunition. Specifically, these laws require every law enforcement agency in the state to develop, adopt, and implement standards for law enforcement officers who request immediate relinquishment of firearms or ammunition.<sup>158</sup> In addition, any violations of the firearms prohibition of any restraining order under this section shall be reported to the prosecuting attorney in the jurisdiction where the order has been issued within two business days of the court hearing unless the restrained party provides a receipt showing compliance at a subsequent hearing or by direct filing with the clerk of the court."<sup>159</sup>

Under the leadership of District Attorney Pamela Y. Price, the ACDAO has led county efforts to support the enactment and implementation of these new gun safety laws. Between 2016 and 2023, according to the California DOJ Office of Gun Violence Prevention, Alameda County was below the state average for final GVROs, along with three other neighboring Bay Area counties, including Contra Costa County.<sup>160</sup>

In 2023, District Attorney Pamela Y. Price testified before the State legislature in support of AB 301, expanding the scope of GVROs, and AB 732, enhancing gun relinquishment responsibilities of the County's justice partners. She then made it a priority for the ACDAO to provide information and advocacy to the community to bring awareness and education specific to domestic violence (DV), DV fatality and Gun Violence, and support access/use of Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVRO).

## Public Safety Impact of Gun Violence



District Attorney Pamela Y. Price testifying before the California State Senate Public Protection Committee in Sacramento on June 27, 2023

District Attorney Price launched a Gun Violence Restraining Order Outreach Project with funding first in 2023 from the California Partnership to End Domestic-Gun Violence Fatality Project, and then in 2024 with a \$100,000 grant from Kaiser Foundation Hospital Fund for Community Benefit Programs at The East Bay Community Foundation. This project of the ACDAO provided critical outreach, education, and legal service referrals for the community to understand and obtain GVROs. Importantly, as GVROs are a civil, not criminal, remedy, prosecutor offices state-wide are not responsible for their availability. City Attorneys more commonly have held this responsibility. The ACDAO's efforts have served as an innovative, best-practices model, going far beyond that expected of a District Attorney.

In 2024, the ACDAO partnered with the Alameda County Superior Court and the Oakland Police Department to secure a significant grant in the amount of \$5,588,089 over two years to improve case management for firearms cases, with a focus on compliance for domestic violence and gun violence restraining order cases. The funding will launch Operation Alameda Safe Relinquishment, coordinating relinquishment activities with law enforcement agencies across the County, and provide education for the courts, law enforcement agencies, stakeholders and the public.

### *Ghost Guns and Unserialized Firearms*

California has passed laws to address the rising issue of ghost guns, which are firearms without serial numbers, making them difficult to trace. AB 1621 (2022) and AB 97 (2023) targeted the production, possession, and sale of unserialized firearms. These bills were precipitated by concerns about the increasing use of ghost guns in violent



crimes across the state. These laws require that ghost gun parts be regulated like a firearm, mandate that all sales or transfers of ghost gun parts in California must be conducted by a licensed firearms dealer, and require all unfinished frames or receivers be engraved with a serial number and the record of sale recorded by the firearms dealer.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, anyone who wishes to purchase ghost gun parts must now undergo a background check and pass and obtain a firearms safety certificate.<sup>162</sup> Additionally, California legislation requires that those who already had an unserialized firearm in their possession apply for a unique serial number by January 1, 2024.<sup>163</sup>

Mirroring state interest in curbing ghost guns, in January of 2022, the Oakland City Council passed an ordinance banning the possession, sale, transfer and manufacture of ghost guns.<sup>164</sup>

In addition to state and local efforts, the federal government has taken steps to regulate ghost gun kits. In 2022, the Biden Administration passed an executive action that clarified that unfinished frames and receivers meet the definition of a firearm and must be regulated as such, imprinted with a serial number.<sup>165</sup> The Supreme Court has granted cert in *Garland v. VanDerStok*, and will consider whether the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has authority to make a rule specifying that weapon parts kits are firearms for purposes of federal regulation. However, the Court has allowed the rule to remain in place while the final ruling is determined.<sup>166</sup>

### *Firearm Safety and Dealer Requirements*

Codified California legislation such as SB 368 (2023) and AB 228 (2022) focused on enhancing firearm dealer accountability by tightening inspections and sale practices. SB 241 (2023) requires licensed firearms dealers to complete training with a testing certification component by the Department of Justice (addresses PC 26920). These laws seek to ensure better oversight of firearm sales and prevent illegal transactions. SB 452 (2023) seeks to improve crime-solving and firearm safety to reduce gun violence by requiring, commencing on January 1, 2028, all new semi-automatic handguns sold in California to be equipped with microstamping technology that imprints a unique code on shell casings fired from that firearm, providing law enforcement with valuable information to identify shooters and gun traffickers. Importantly, this bill also requires the Department of Justice to provide written guidance defining and declaring technology viability of microstamping before the law takes effect.

On the local level, these new laws provide County law enforcement partners valuable new investigatory tools.

### *Firearm Manufacturers Requirement*

AB 2156, effective Jan 1, 2023, provided local law enforcement and the ACDAO new tools for protecting public safety by expanding the prohibitions on the manufacture of firearms without a state license, including reducing the number of guns any person,

## Public Safety Impact of Gun Violence

regardless of federal licensure, may manufacture without a state license from 50 to 3 and prohibits the use of a three-dimensional printer to manufacture any firearm without a license.

### *Waiting Periods and Background Checks*

Bills like AB 1406 (2023) establish stricter waiting periods for firearm purchases, designed to reduce impulsive acts of violence, particularly suicide. These laws build on research showing that waiting periods are an effective method of reducing gun violence.

### *Community-Based Violence Prevention*

AB 762 (2023) and AB 28 (2023) focus on community-based violence prevention programs, with the latter, known as the *Gun Violence Prevention and School Safety Act*, aiming to allocate funds toward mental health services, school safety, and gun crime investigations. As discussed in earlier in this report, AB 28 created a new firearm excise tax that provides more opportunities for the County to apply for state funding for innovative gun violence prevention and intervention programs through the Gun Violence Prevention and School Safety Fund.

## E. Building Public Safety by Addressing Root Causes of Violence and Promoting Equity

Despite making up just 4% of the global population, the U.S. holds 25% of the world's prisoners.<sup>167</sup> Mass incarceration remains a critical issue in the United States, disproportionately impacting communities of color.

While the public is increasingly aware of the harmful impact of the war on drugs on mass incarceration, a lesser known yet still significant driver of mass incarceration is the criminal legal system's response to nonviolent illegal gun possession. The enforcement of laws around nonviolent, illegal gun possession continues to contribute to mass incarceration. Each year, thousands of individuals across the U.S. are incarcerated for gun possession charges, despite many having no intention of using a weapon in a violent act.<sup>168</sup> This overreliance on incarceration for nonviolent offenses has further strained communities already heavily impacted by over-policing and criminalization.<sup>169</sup>

Given that most violent crime in any city is driven by a small percentage of individuals, we can improve public safety and reduce mass incarceration by rethinking our approach to nonviolent gun possession and freeing up resources to address serious acts of gun violence. Further, as we have discussed in Part I of this report, socio-economic strain increases, rather than decreases, vulnerability to victimization and perpetration of gun violence. From both a public safety and public health perspective, the County needs to find new solutions for attacking the intersection of gun violence and socio-economic

disenfranchisement, especially for young people, if we hope to build toward a community free of gun violence.

This report explores innovative public safety solutions to addressing and interrupting patterns of gun violence in Alameda County.

### **Mentor Gun Diversion Program**

In April 2023, the Alameda County District Attorney's Office introduced an innovative pilot program, through Collaborative Courts, called the Alameda County Mentor Diversion Gun Violence Program. Diversion programs, like Alameda County's Collaborative Courts and other prosecutor-led diversion programs, share a common goal: reducing violence through proactive and supportive measures that address the root causes of harmful behavior.

The ACDAO pilot program offers young first-time offenders arrested in possession of a gun a constructive alternative to incarceration through mentorship and resources to encourage better decision-making. The program helps youth identify ways to feel safe without feeling like they need to possess a firearm, and it provides them with positive supports to help them transform their lives.

Research shows that many people, particularly those living in high-violence areas, carry guns not to commit crimes, but as a means of perceived self-protection. Exposure to violence and a desire to protect oneself and family or friends are common reasons for individuals to carry a firearm.<sup>170</sup> While gun carrying may feel like a protective measure, research indicates that it increases the risk of exposure to violence and death by firearm.<sup>171</sup> This disconnect between perceived safety and risk of exposure underscores the complex motivations behind gun possession and the need for strategic, proactive interventions.

This innovative diversion program for first-time gun offenders builds off the evidence of similar programs across the country.<sup>172</sup> Specifically, ACDAO's gun diversion pilot was modelled after one employed by the Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, the prosecuting agency in Baltimore City and the largest local prosecutorial office in the state of Maryland.

ACDOA's pilot partners with Youth Alive to pair each young offender with a mentor, providing guidance and support to help them steer away from a path of crime. To be eligible for this program: defendants must be under the age of 26 and, have little to no prior criminal history; the offense committed must not have included violence; and the Court must approve their entry into the program. By targeting underlying issues at the root of why a youth feels compelled to carry a gun, innovative diversion programs empower participants with the tools they need to avoid reoffending and build

## Public Safety Impact of Gun Violence

sustainable pathways to positive life outcomes. Broadly, the pilot seeks to reduce the debilitating impact that gun violence has on the broader community.

### Minimizing the Use of Gun Enhancements

An enhancement is a statute that increases the defendant's sentence or bail amount for a crime based on specific factors. These factors include but are not limited to, a defendant's prior convictions, the vulnerability of the victim, or whether the conduct is repeated. A gun enhancement may be added to a defendant's list of charges, for example, if the prosecutor finds evidence that a firearm was used when the crime was committed. This form of enhancement was intended to reduce gun-related crimes committed by offenders in extraordinary situations.

Historically, prosecutors in Alameda County and state-wide were encouraged to add criminal enhancements to cases whenever a firearm was used as an instrument of the crime or in the possession of the defendant. However, the California legislature has pushed back against the wide use of enhancements, seeing the need for consistency and protection against racially biased aggravated sentencing for defendants of color.<sup>173</sup> Alameda County's Board of Supervisors too has recognized the need under The Racial Justice Act of 2020 to take action to eliminate racial bias from California's criminal justice system when persons are charged, convicted, or sentenced for a crime.<sup>174</sup>

To be in alignment with the Racial Justice Act (a state law that went into effect in 2023 and that prohibits racial bias in the criminal-legal process), while also protecting the conviction integrity of cases prosecuted by the ACDAO, District Attorney Price developed new office-wide protocols for critically reviewing and charging felony cases with enhancements. Under these protocols—Special Directives 23-01<sup>175</sup> and 23-02<sup>176</sup>—charging prosecutors are to obtain supervisory approval before adding certain specified enhancements to a case, including particularly gun enhancement charges. This workflow protects conviction integrity by ensuring that charges are based on criteria in keeping with the rule of law and are co-reviewed/peer-reviewed prior to being added to the base charge to guard against racial bias.

Furthermore, per this protocol and in keeping with law establishing judicial sentencing guidelines,<sup>177</sup> a vulnerable victim and extraordinary circumstances must be present in the facts of the matter before a charging prosecutor can add the enhancement. Examples of these circumstances depend on whether the defendant is a threat to public safety by committing extreme acts of violence or if there is a vulnerable victim connected to the case. To be clear, the Alameda County District Attorney's Office still uses enhancements when it is appropriate, however, there are additional protections in place to prevent enhancements from being applied unfairly and unjustly.<sup>178</sup>

## F. Recommendations – Public Safety

Based on empirical evidence and concern for public safety and gun violence prevention, ACDAO makes the following comprehensive policy recommendations for reducing gun violence while promoting equity and public safety.

### **1. Enhanced Firearm Relinquishment Program**

- Implement Operation Alameda Safe Relinquishment's \$5.58M grant program
- Coordinate relinquishment protocols across law enforcement agencies
- Provide education on relinquishment compliance for the courts, law enforcement agencies, stakeholders and the public
- Establish dedicated tracking system for court-ordered surrenders
- Leverage AB 732's stricter 48-hour relinquishment timeline
- Create specialized prosecution unit for GVRO and DV restraining order enforcement

### **2. Ghost Gun Prevention**

- Support expanded enforcement of AB 1621 and AB 97 regulations
- Partner with regional task force to target trafficking networks
- Enhance data collection on ghost gun recoveries per DOJ requirements
- Prioritize prosecution of ghost gun manufacturing operations
- Coordinate with federal partners on interstate cases

### **3. Data-Driven Prosecution Strategy**

- Implement SB 2's post-Bruen framework for permitting legal gun ownership
- Focus enforcement on demonstrably high-risk individuals
- Expand diversion programs for non-violent possession cases
- Continue to apply gun enhancements selectively per Special Directive 23-01
- Track demographic impacts through Racial Justice Act metrics

## Public Safety Impact of Gun Violence

### 4. Community Violence Prevention

- Apply for State grants resulting from AB 28 gun tax revenue for prevention programs
- Expand CalVIP grant funding to \$2.5M annually through AB 762
- Increase support for hospital-based intervention programs
- Fund community-based credible messenger initiatives
- Partner with public health agencies on upstream prevention
- Continue to publicize availability and effectiveness of GVROs to the community

### 5. Domestic Violence Prevention

- Strengthen enforcement of SB 320 relinquishment requirements
- Improve DVRO/GVRO service and compliance tracking
- Enhance lethality assessment protocols for charging deputies, probation officers and courts
- Support survivor-centered prosecution approaches
- Coordinate with victim services providers to ensure improved delivery of services for children and youth as well as adult victims
- Ensure adequate funding for Alameda County's Trauma Recovery Center

### 6. Youth Violence Prevention

- Expand Gun Violence Mentor Diversion Program and alternative programs for transition-age youth (TAY)
- Partner with school-based intervention programs on threat assessment
- Support safe storage education and enforcement of gun storage laws
- Target illegal firearm access and purveyors to minors
- Fund youth development programs

### Implementation Priorities

The ACDAO has several implementation priorities following the successful procurement of multiple grants to support anti-gun violence initiatives in Alameda County. They include the following steps:

1. Create a multi-agency coordination team to build out the relinquishment program
2. Establish data sharing agreements with law enforcement partners
3. Develop training on new legislative requirements
4. Build community advisory board for violence prevention across the County
5. Create evaluation framework to track outcomes

### Key Performance Indicators

The key performance indicators of success in future strategic initiatives include:

- Firearm relinquishment compliance rates
- Ghost gun recovery trends
- Diversion program completion rates
- Shooting and homicide reductions
- Demographic equity metrics
- Community partnership measure, including: the retention of, formalized collaboration with, and added community partnerships

This framework balances enforcement with prevention while prioritizing evidence-based strategies and equity considerations. Regular assessment will allow for ongoing refinement based on outcomes data.

# Conclusion

This report reflects understanding that collaborative efforts across sectors are needed to develop long-term solutions that address the root causes of gun violence. Recommendations proffered imagine future opportunity for collaboration and cooperation between County public health and public safety partners. Public safety and public health stakeholders, in partnership with community-based organizations, must confront the evolving danger of gun violence in our communities together.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its disruption to essential community violence intervention programs and government resources left our most under-resourced community groups vulnerable to violence. This reality contributed to an increased uptake in firearm purchases and ownership and coincided with a rise in ghost guns. Recognizing these trends, this report is intended to inform and support violence reduction strategies centered in the communities most affected.

Throughout this report we have provided a look at how gun violence impacts children, transition-age youth, and women who primarily reside in marginalized communities and under-resourced neighborhoods. We outline how residents of color are disproportionately burdened by gun violence and emphasize how these racial disparities are driven by structural inequities and historical injustices like poverty and a legacy of discriminatory policies. We examine how easy access to firearms and the proliferation of ghost guns has fueled violence, and explain how innovative gun law enforcement, safe storage practices and equitable enforcement practices can help curb crime guns and reduce violence.

Alameda County has a legacy of cultivating successful community-led violence intervention efforts. These strategies to reduce gun violence and promote wellbeing have proven effective and are discussed within this report. We must continue to address the structural inequities which contribute to violence and provide sustained supports for community violence intervention programs. At the same time, it is important to advance diversion strategies that keep residents safe while minimizing the harms of the carceral system.

Gun violence is preventable. However, no one agency can solve this issue alone as we each have a role to play in reducing violence. This report serves as a foundation to help collectively develop solutions to reduce violence over the long run. We extend an open invitation to County departments, violence intervention advocates, law enforcement agencies, community members, service providers, and civil servants alike to join the ACDAO's efforts to address violence. Whether through future gun violence prevention roundtables or joint public health and safety convenings, we welcome the discussion of insights on the data and strategic approaches presented in this report. Together, we



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can reduce violence and build an Alameda County where all residents can live healthy lives, free from violence.

## Appendix I: Gun Violence Mailer

# How do guns increase the risk of violence?

3x

Increased homicide risk  
when a gun is present in  
the home, as compared  
to homes without guns

8x

Increased homicide  
risk when the  
perpetrator is an  
**intimate partner or  
relative** of the victim

20x

Increased homicide risk when **previous  
incidents of domestic violence exist**

Source: Kellerman AL, Rivara FP, Rushforth NB,  
et al. Gun ownership as a risk factor for homicide in  
the home. New England Journal of Medicine.  
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**PAMELA PRICE  
ALAMEDA COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT RESOURCES  
AVAILABLE, VISIT [SPEAKFORSAFETY.ORG](http://SPEAKFORSAFETY.ORG)

Alameda County District Attorney's Office  
1225 Fallon Street  
Oakland, CA 94612



Speak for Safety: To learn more about Gun Violence Restraining Orders, a historic new tool for temporarily removing guns and ammunition from individuals who are at risk of harming themselves or others please scan or visit:

**speakforsafety.org**

Family Justice Center: The Alameda County Family Justice Center is available to assist survivors in need of law enforcement, emergency services, and navigating the legal system. To learn more about the Alameda County Family Justice Center and its 80 partner organizations please scan or visit:



**acfjc.org**

For information, please visit [acfj.org](http://acfj.org),  
Call (510) 267-8800 or email  
[Ask.FJC@acgov.org](mailto:Ask.FJC@acgov.org)

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