

RESEARCH REPORT

Reducing Gun Violence in Brooklyn

Recommendations to Improve Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Initiatives in the East Flatbush Neighborhood and Surrounding Areas

Lily Robin
URBAN INSTITUTE

Andreea Matei
URBAN INSTITUTE

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Josh Fording
URBAN INSTITUTE

Jerome Louison
KINGS AGAINST
VIOLENCE INITIATIVE

Travis Reginal
URBAN INSTITUTE

Ramik Jamar Williams
KINGS AGAINST
VIOLENCE INITIATIVE

Paige S. Thompson
URBAN INSTITUTE



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Executive Summary

With funding from the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), Urban, in partnership with the Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI), investigated gun violence and gun violence prevention and intervention initiatives in the 67th Precinct and surrounding neighborhoods through a review of existing literature, analysis of crime and shooting data, and interviews and focus groups with gun violence prevention and intervention initiative staff and community members.

Crime and gun violence rates are high in the 67th Precinct, though there are other communities in Brooklyn with higher rates of crime and gun violence. In addition, several community members noted that, while the neighborhood has historically been violent, that has been changing over time. Community members and staff at anti-gun violence interventions identified drivers of violence in the community as poverty and a lack of resources and opportunities, a lack of education and enrichment opportunities, unaddressed mental health needs, a lack of skills in peaceful conflict resolution, the increased ease of obtaining a gun, and the influence of current media including music and video games. Community members and antiviolence staff also noted strengths of the community, including the tapestry of diverse small businesses, community events, and the collaborative nature of the community. However, several community members noted that gentrification is eating away at those strengths.

Many different gun violence prevention, interruption, and intervention initiatives exist in the 67th Precinct, including those led by criminal legal system actors and those led by community members. All of these initiatives have seen some success but are also hampered by many barriers. Community-led initiatives struggle with a limited amount of grant funding, which sometimes results in a competitive instead of collaborative environment across organizations in the antiviolence space. More funding would also help these organizations hire up enough staff and support staff to prevent burnout. Visibility also hampers these organizations in making strides to prevent violence in the communities they work in. Staff also noted that a lack of housing for people in crisis is a barrier. Despite these barriers, these organizations are making an impact through data-driven strategies that are tailored to the needs of the communities they work in.

Based on our research findings, we identified the following five recommendations for gun violence prevention and intervention work:

- Recommendation 1: Rely on evidence to target research, funding, and initiatives to the areas most in need.

- Recommendation 2: Leverage and grow the existing strengths of communities. In East Flatbush, invest in the community in ways that highlight existing resources, strengthen social ties, and support small locally owned business.
- Recommendation 3: Identify and address drivers of gun violence. In East Flatbush, invest in mental health care as well as education and enrichment opportunities for young people that teach social-emotional skills and peaceful conflict resolution.
- Recommendation 4: Develop funding opportunities for gun violence prevention and intervention programs that encourage collaboration and visibility in the community. In East Flatbush, the New York City government should develop funding mechanisms that support collaboration among programs as opposed to competition and that are sufficient to support staffing needs and increase programs' visibility. Colleges could also have a role in supporting staffing and visibility.
- Recommendation 5: Invest in community engagement and cultural competency for law enforcement and other criminal legal system actors. In East Flatbush, ask community members how law enforcement can best engage with the community and focus community engagement efforts on other criminal legal system actors.

Reducing Gun Violence in Brooklyn

Since the peak of violent crime in the early 1990s, New York City experienced a sustained decline in violence, but, like many cities across the country, has seen an increase in violent crime since 2019. In the 67th Precinct in particular, where the East Flatbush neighborhood is located, there were 34.5 shootings per 100,000 people in 2022.¹ There are several community-led, government-led, and law enforcement-led initiatives in East Flatbush and surrounding areas to address violent crime and gun violence. The Urban Institute was funded by the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) in 2020 to conduct research to understand the context of gun violence and gun violence prevention and intervention initiatives operating in and around the 67th Precinct and how these interventions interact with each other.

With funding from MOCJ, Urban, in partnership with the Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI; box 1), investigated gun violence and gun violence prevention and intervention initiatives in the 67th Precinct and surrounding neighborhoods through a review of existing literature, analysis of crime and shooting data, and interviews and focus groups with gun violence prevention and intervention initiative staff and community members.

BOX 1

The Kings Against Violence Initiative

The Kings Against Violence Initiative is “a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) youth-serving organization with a mission to prevent and eliminate interpersonal violence from the lives of young people through advocacy, peer leadership, community mobilization, and social justice.” KAVI uses a public health approach to ending violence and operates youth violence programs in Brooklyn. It operates Cure Violence programs within the Crisis Management System. KAVI works in three interconnected ways: advocating for legislation that impacts the communities and populations it serves; metric evaluation of efforts to outcomes that capture and elevate community voices; and providing direct services in community settings, hospitals, and schools. KAVI was developed to combat violence and protect Brooklyn communities. KAVI's evidence-based, hospital-based violence intervention program is based in Kings County Medical Center and is designed to interrupt violence among young people and adults in a multipronged approach. A Level 1 Trauma Center, Kings County Hospital Center sees some of the highest volumes of pediatric, adolescent, and adult trauma cases in New York City.

Source: KAVI staff and <https://www.kavibrooklyn.org/>.

Study Design and Methods

Urban and KAVI investigated the following research questions:

- What is the context of gun violence in and around the 67th Precinct?
 - » What are current rates and trends in rates of violence and shootings in and around the 67th Precinct?
 - » How do community members and violence prevention and intervention program staff see gun violence in and around the 67th Precinct?
- What are drivers of gun violence in and around the 67th Precinct?
- What are strengths and opportunities in and around the 67th Precinct to address gun violence?
- What gun violence interventions are currently operating in the 67th Precinct?
 - » What is the level of community awareness around these interventions?
 - » What do current operations look like?
 - » How do currently operating gun violence interventions in and around the 67th Precinct interact with each other?
 - » How has the pandemic impacted this?

To answer these questions, the research team began by collecting relevant documents about gun violence and gun violence prevention and intervention initiatives from MOCJ and online research. The research team also analyzed crime and shooting data and conducted interviews and focus groups with community members and gun violence prevention and intervention initiative staff.

Crime and Shooting Data Analysis

To gain a broader picture of trends in gun violence, the research team collected and analyzed data on crime and shooting incidents in New York City during the period 2006 to 2022 from the New York City Police Department.² The team used population and demographic data from the American Community Survey and Geographic Information Systems Analysis from John Keefe³ to calculate rates. For shooting rates by precinct, we were restricted to population data for 2010 and 2020 as yearly population data were not available. We used 2010 populations for years before 2015 and 2020 populations for 2015 to 2022.

Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Program Interviews and Focus Groups

To understand how gun violence initiatives in and around the 67th Precinct function and how they complement or conflict with each other, we conducted semistructured hour-long interviews with gun violence prevention and initiative staff. We identified initiatives through materials provided by MOCJ and online research and reached out to initiatives through publicly available contact information. We leveraged existing contacts through Urban and KAVI staff where possible. We reached out to staff at six organizations and were able to conduct five interviews with staff at three organizations and one focus group with multiple staff members at one organization.

Community Member Interviews and Focus Groups

To understand community perspectives, we conducted focus groups and interviews with community members. The focus groups and interviews covered awareness of gun violence intervention efforts, the causes of gun violence in their community, personal indirect or direct experience with gun violence, and solutions to gun violence, as well as the gaps and strengths of the community. KAVI staff recruited focus group members by sharing flyers throughout the community, setting up a desk at public gathering places such as libraries, and reaching out to community groups with interest and stake in the issue of gun violence. They also employed snowball sampling methods, reaching out to participants and asking them to bring other people they know to the focus groups. We held a mix of in-person and virtual focus groups, and we offered virtual interviews as well to increase participation from a wide range of community members in the 67th Precinct and surrounding areas.

We conducted five focus groups and one interview with a total of 34 people. We asked participants to complete a questionnaire about their background. We did not collect questionnaires from virtual focus group or interview participants. Of the 34 participants, we have forms from 28 participants. Of the people who filled out the questionnaire, 12 said they lived or worked in the 67th Precinct, 6 said they weren't sure, and 10 said they did not but did live or work in Brooklyn. The focus groups brought in people of various ages ranging from 18 to 81. Special attention was paid to incorporate long-standing members of the community through working with retirement homes and groups for older adults, such as Age Friendly Central Brooklyn. KAVI distributed flyers and conducted targeted outreach to specific organizations and venues to recruit focus group participants. Of participants who shared their age (27 people), 15 were 65 or older and the median age across the rest of participants (12 people) was 35. In East Flatbush, 19 percent of the population is 65 or older and most people are 25 to 44 (28 percent) or 45 to 64 (27 percent).⁴ Of those who filled out the

questionnaire, 86 percent were female, 85 percent were African American/Black, and 79 percent were born in the United States. We also asked people about their relationship to gun violence: 48 percent reported that they had been directly impacted by gun violence and 64 percent reported that a family member or close friend was a victim of gun violence.

TABLE 1
Background Information on Participants in Urban’s Focus Groups on Gun Violence in East Flatbush
Compared with overall East Flatbush population

	Focus group sample	East Flatbush population
Sex		
Female	86%	55%
Male	14%	45%
Nonbinary	0%	unknown
Race/ethnicity		
African American/Black	74%	88%
African American/Black and Hispanic/Latinx	11%	unknown
Hispanic/Latinx	4%	7%
Birthplace		
Born outside the United States	21%	52%
Impacted by gun violence		
Directly impacted by gun violence	48%	unknown
Family or close friend was a victim of gun violence	64%	unknown

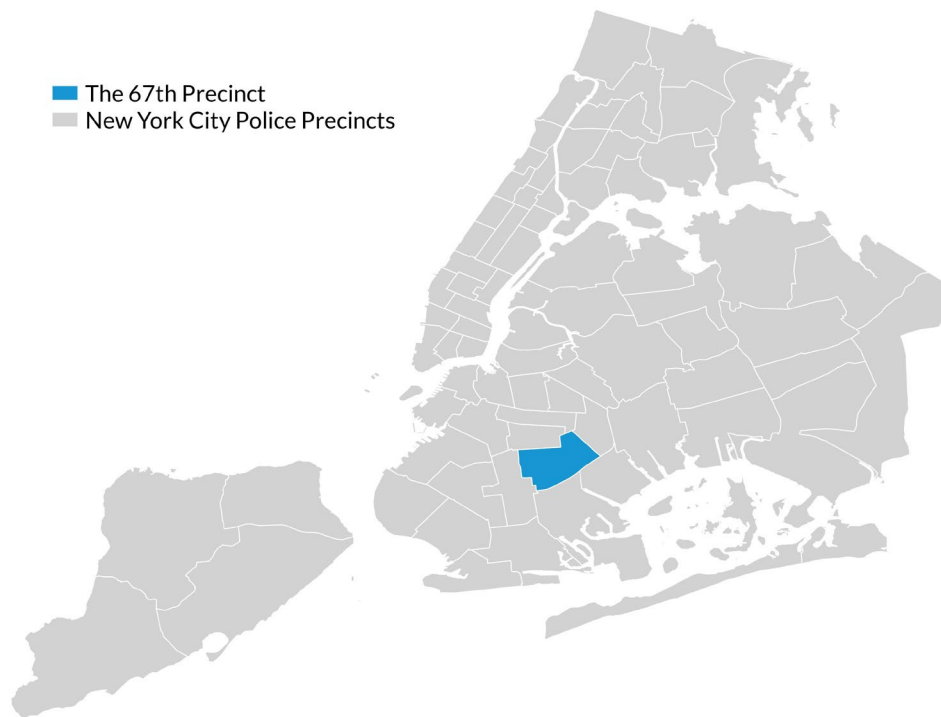
Source: Questionnaire provided to focus group participants by Urban staff; “Community Health Profiles,” New York City Health, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://a816-health.nyc.gov/hdi/profiles/>; “East Flatbush, Farragut & Rugby Puma, NY,” Data USA, accessed on December 26, 2023, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/east-flatbush-farragut-rugby-puma-ny#>.

Brooklyn’s 67th Precinct

The 67th Precinct comprises East Flatbush, the heart of the precinct, and parts of many other surrounding neighborhoods (figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Brooklyn's 67th Police Precinct



Source: "Police Precincts," NYC Open Data, accessed November 2023, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/Police-Precincts/78dh-3ptz>.

Over 150,000 people live in East Flatbush, of whom about 88 percent identify as Black, 7 percent as Hispanic, 2 percent as white, and 2 percent as Asian.⁵ Over half of residents (52 percent) were born outside of the United States, but English proficiency is higher than in the city as a whole—only 8 percent of residents report limited English proficiency in East Flatbush.⁶

Brooklyn was known as the "City of Churches" in the 19th century due to the proliferation of religious centers from the immigrant populations that settled there.⁷ East Flatbush is no different; religious centers are among the most common businesses in Flatbush (SBS 2023). There are a handful of grade schools in East Flatbush, and there are some smaller religious colleges nearby and Brooklyn College is slightly south of the neighborhood. In Flatbush broadly, there are 26 schools, day cares, and preschools (SBS 2023).

Community Strengths, Gaps, and Opportunities

East Flatbush is a unique neighborhood in New York City, where its diversity of backgrounds shows up in its businesses. East Flatbush is home to a thriving Caribbean community, and much of the commerce in the area reflects this. There are also several community events that draw the neighborhood together. Additionally, the neighborhood is walkable and readily accessible by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority subway trains (SBS 2023). In focus groups, community residents named the diversity of the neighborhood and a diversity of thriving businesses, particularly small businesses, as strengths of the community. Anti-gun violence staff also spoke of the diversity of the neighborhood and fabric of small businesses in the neighborhood as a strength.

In interviews and focus groups, anti-gun violence staff talked about the neighborhood as a collaborative environment and noted that it benefits from the influx of people it gets from its proximity to Kings County and Downstate University, suggesting a dynamic and diverse environment that constantly welcomes new perspectives and ideas. Some community residents reported that a feeling of community and communal support used to be a strength of the neighborhood, but believe that has changed over time. Participants explained that due to gentrification, ties between neighbors are breaking down and large chain stores are replacing small businesses. A little under three-quarters of adults (73 percent) reported that their neighbors are willing to help one another in the 2017 to 2018 NYC FOHMH Community Health Survey, a slightly lower rate than the 77 percent in Brooklyn and citywide.⁸ Some focus group participants speculated that the weakening of connections between neighbors may contribute to gun violence.

Community members and anti-gun violence staff noted challenges in the community with poverty and educational and enrichment opportunities for young people. Sixteen percent of East Flatbush residents have incomes under the federal poverty level and over half of residents (53 percent) are rent burdened, meaning over 30 percent of their income goes to housing.⁹ Community members who participated in focus groups and interviews explained how poverty may contribute to a lack of programs and opportunities for young people. One participant pointed out that many parents in the community cannot afford to pay for after-school programs for their children. Another participant added that poverty can also hinder parents' ability to care for their children's social and emotional well-being, because parents are stretched so thin just to make ends meet.

There is one major hospital and emergency room in close proximity to the East Flatbush neighborhood: Kings County Hospital Emergency Room. There are other health care providers throughout the neighborhood, but very few are open 24 hours a day. The East Flatbush Community

Health Profile reports a higher rate of adults reporting their own health as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good” (82 percent) than the rate in Brooklyn overall (78 percent). But the rate of avoidable hospitalizations among adults is slightly higher than that of Brooklyn and much higher for children at 1,308 per 100,000 children, compared with 502 in Brooklyn and 623 in the city overall.¹⁰

Some anti-gun violence program staff also noted the need for more green space in the neighborhood. This is unsurprising, as a 2021 article in the *Brooklyn Paper* reported that, based on findings from an analysis by New Yorkers for Parks, East Flatbush has less parkland than all other New York City neighborhoods.¹¹

Anti-gun violence staff felt the cultural richness, historical significance, and flow of resources into East Flatbush presented opportunities for growth and development in the neighborhood.

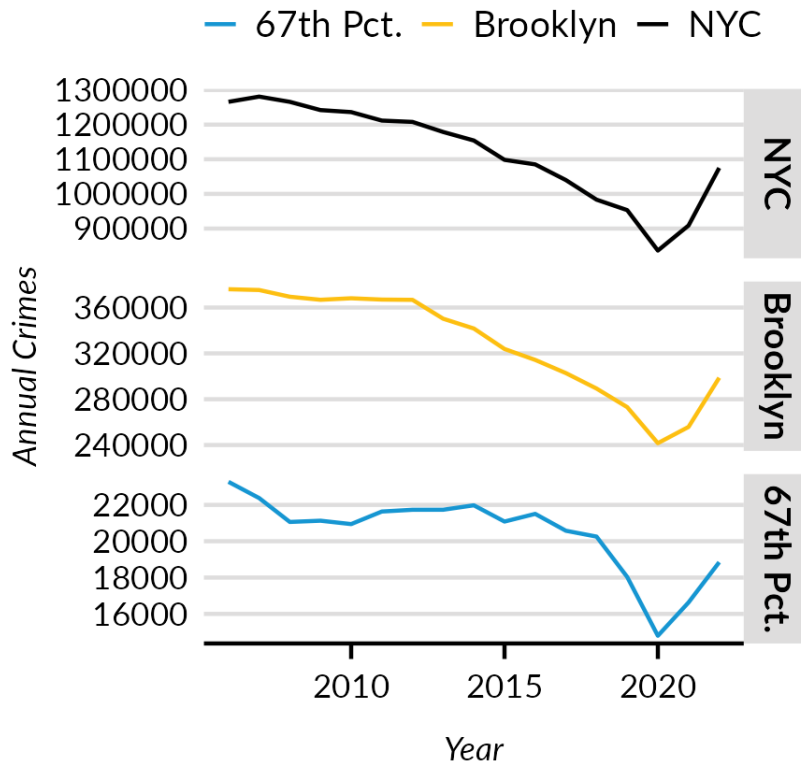
Crime Statistics

While violent crime and gun violence have been declining across the nation for decades, there has been an increase over the past few years. At three geographical levels—the 67th Precinct, Brooklyn, and New York City—crime has followed a similar pattern since 2006. Crime steadily decreased for over a decade before rising again in 2021 and 2022. Although crime was still lower in 2022 than it had been in the mid-2000s, the uptick beginning in 2021 reversed a long pattern of falling crime rates. Crime rates followed a similar pattern, having declined over several years before rising again in 2021 and 2022. Figures 2 and 3 show crime frequencies since 2006 and crime rates since 2015.

FIGURE 2

Crimes Have Been Declining Since 2006, but Started to Rise Recently

Annual crimes in NYC, Brooklyn, and the 67th Precinct from 2006 to 2022



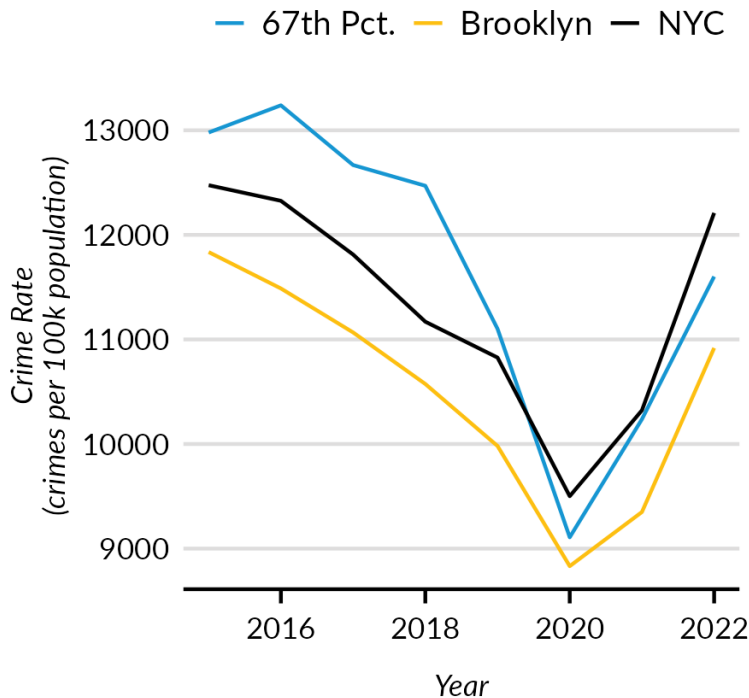
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Source: Urban analysis of "Historical New York City Crime Data," New York Police Department, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/crime-statistics/historical.page>.

FIGURE 3

Following Several Years of Declines, Crime Rates Rose in Recent Years

Crime rates in NYC, Brooklyn, and the 67th Precinct from 2015 to 2022



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Source: Urban analysis of “Historical New York City Crime Data,” New York Police Department, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/crime-statistics/historical.page>, and John Keepe, “Sharing NC Police Precinct Data,” Johnkeepe.net, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://johnkeepe.net/nyc-police-precinct-and-census-data>.

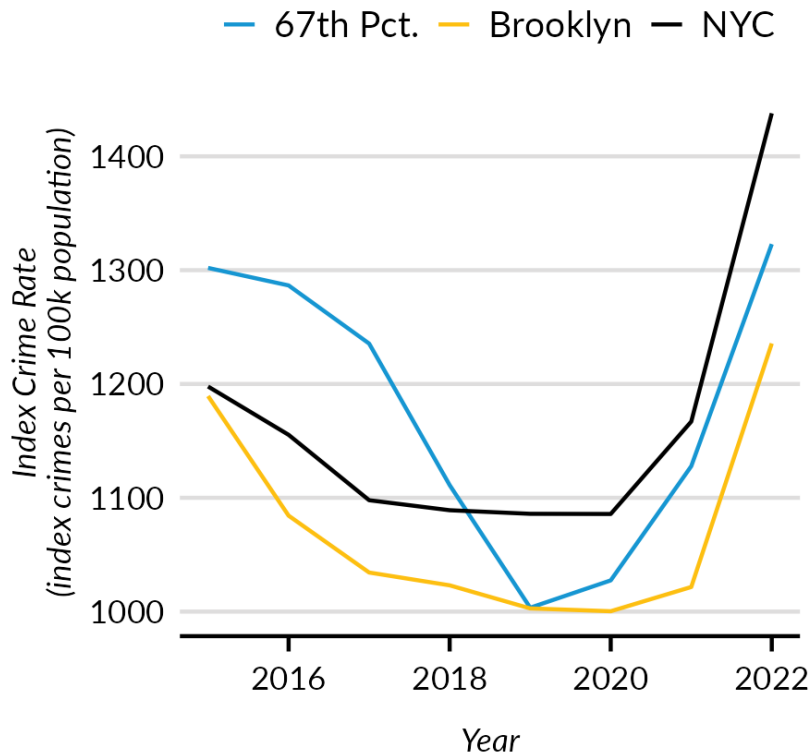
Notes: Populations by precinct were unavailable per year. We used 2020 populations as an estimate for all years from John Keepe. “Sharing NC Police Precinct Data,” Johnkeepe.net, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://johnkeepe.net/nyc-police-precinct-and-census-data>.

We also looked specifically at index crimes and violent crimes. Index crimes include Murder and Non-Negligent Manslaughter, Rape, Robbery, Felony Assault, Burglary, Grand Larceny, and Grand Larceny of Motor Vehicle. We defined violent crimes as crimes against people, which includes Murder and Non-Negligent Manslaughter, Rape, Robbery, Felony Assault, and Assault 3 and Related Offenses. In the 67th Precinct, Brooklyn, and New York City as a whole, index crimes and violent crimes followed the same pattern as all crimes overall. They fell more or less consistently until 2021 or 2022, when they increased dramatically. Of the three geographical levels, Brooklyn has the lowest violent crime rate, followed by New York City, and the 67th Precinct has the highest violent crime rate. Figures 4 and 5 show index crime rates and violent crime rates, respectively, from 2015 to 2022.

FIGURE 4

Index Crime Rates Rose Dramatically in Recent Years

Index Crime Rate in NYC, Brooklyn, and the 67th Precinct from 2015 to 2022



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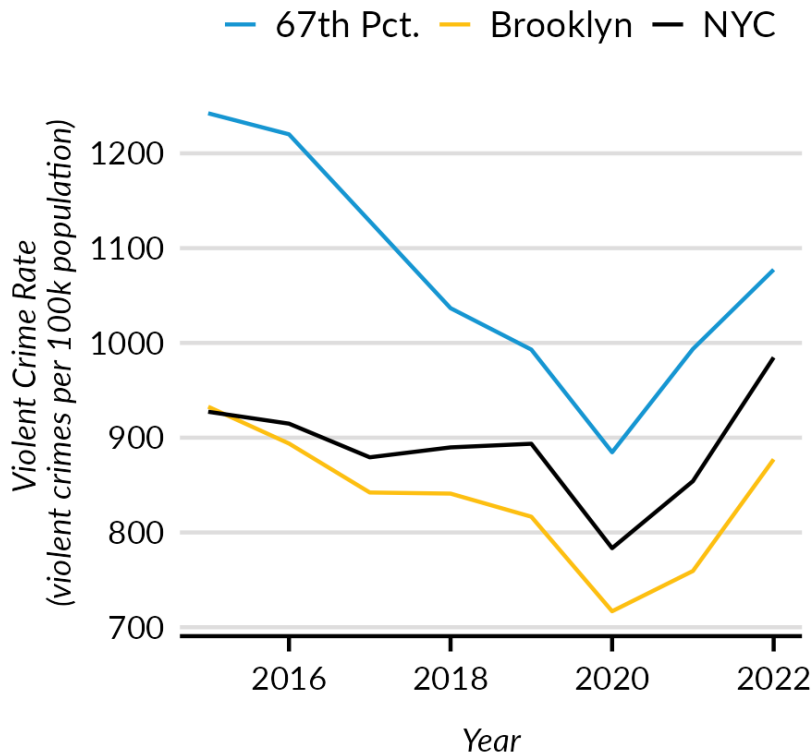
Source: Urban analysis of "Historical New York City Crime Data," New York Police Department, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/crime-statistics/historical.page>, and John Keepe, "Sharing NC Police Precinct Data," Johnkeepe.net, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://johnkeepe.net/nyc-police-precinct-and-census-data>.

Notes: Populations by precinct were unavailable per year. 2020 populations were used as an estimate for all years from John Keepe. "Sharing NC Police Precinct Data," Johnkeepe.net, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://johnkeepe.net/nyc-police-precinct-and-census-data>.

FIGURE 5

Violent Crime Rates Rose in Recent Years after Declining for Several Years

Violent Crime Rate in NYC, Brooklyn, and the 67th Precinct from 2015 to 2022



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Source: Urban analysis of “Historical New York City Crime Data,” New York Police Department, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/crime-statistics/historical.page>, and John Keepe, “Sharing NC Police Precinct Data,” Johnkeepe.net, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://johnkeefe.net/nyc-police-precinct-and-census-data>.

Notes: Populations by precinct were unavailable per year. 2020 populations were used as an estimate for all years John Keepe, “Sharing NC Police Precinct Data,” Johnkeepe.net, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://johnkeefe.net/nyc-police-precinct-and-census-data>.

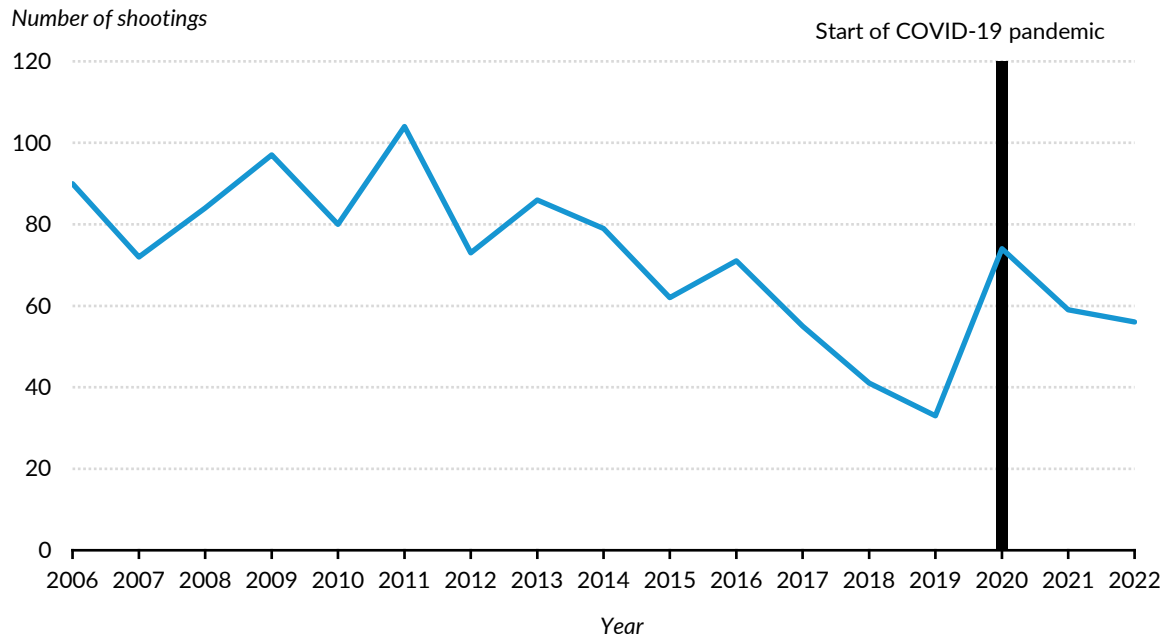
Gun Violence Statistics

In Brooklyn, shootings rapidly rose from 372 shootings in 2019 to 819 in 2020. This rise in shootings was also observed in the 67th Precinct, where shootings increased from 33 to 74 (figure 6), a rate of 45.6 shootings per 100,000 people in 2020. This sharp increase in the 67th Precinct –was in line with increases in crime across the nation. Shooting rates have been steadily declining in the 67th Precinct over the past two decades and also over the past two years. There were 56 shootings in 2022, a rate of 34.5 shootings per 100,000 people.

FIGURE 6

Shootings Have Been Declining Over the Past 20 Years in the 67th Precinct

Shootings by year in the 67th Precinct



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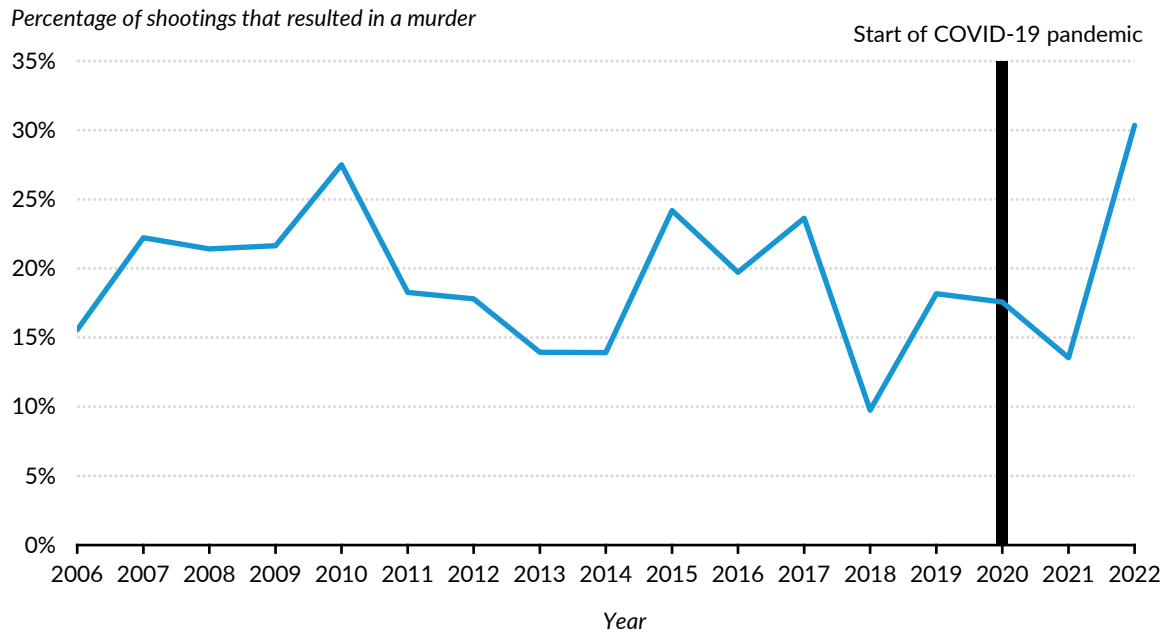
Source: Urban analysis of "NYPD Shooting Incident Data (Historic)," NYC Open Data, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Shooting-Incident-Data-Historic-/833y-fsy8>.

While the number of shootings has declined in the 67th Precinct since 2020, the percentage of shootings resulting in a murder spiked in 2022.

FIGURE 7

The Percentage of Shootings Resulting in a Murder in the 67th Precinct Spiked in 2022

Percentage of shootings resulting in a murder in the 67th Precinct by year



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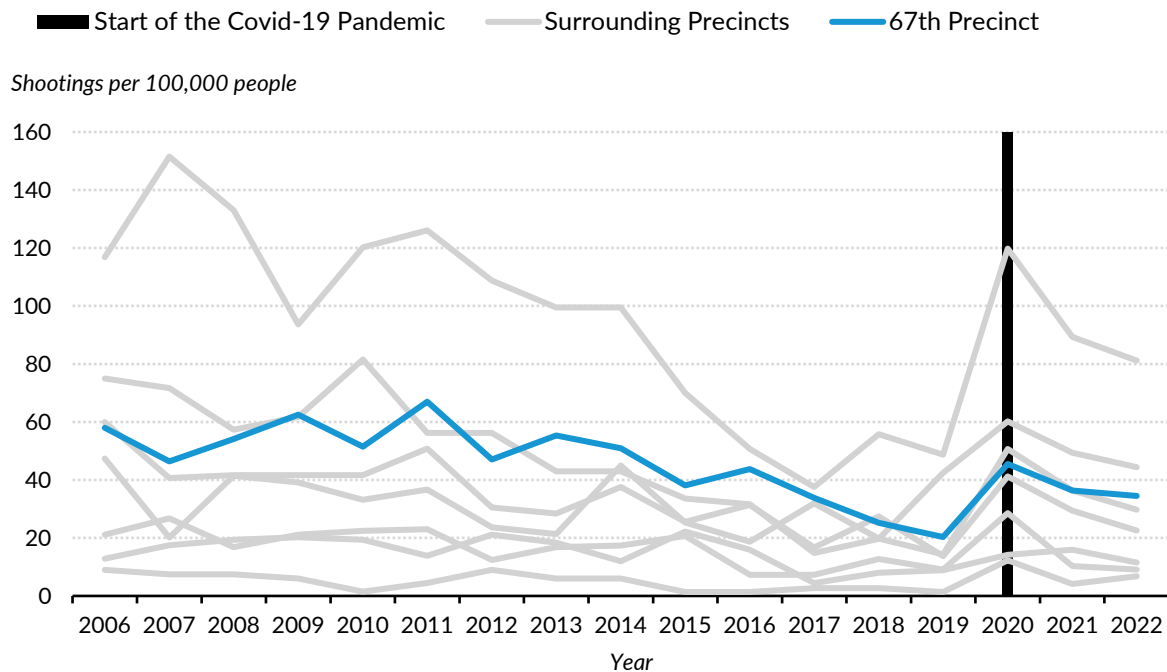
Source: Urban analysis of "NYPD Shooting Incident Data (Historic)," NYC Open Data, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Shooting-Incident-Data-Historic-/833y-fsy8>.

While shooting rates are high in the 67th Precinct, some surrounding precincts have higher shooting rates. In particular, the 73rd Precinct had a shooting rate of 119.8 per 100,00 people in 2020, 89.3 in 2021, and 81.2 in 2022. However, the 67th Precinct did have the fifth highest shooting rate of all 22 Brooklyn precincts in 2022.

FIGURE 8

Two Surrounding Precincts Had Higher Shooting Rates Than the 67th Precinct in 2022

Shootings per 100,000 people by precinct for the 67th Precinct and surrounding precincts



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Source: Urban analysis of "NYPD Shooting Incident Data (Historic)," NYC Open Data, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Shooting-Incident-Data-Historic-/833y-fsy8>, and John Keepe, "Sharing NC Police Precinct Data," Johnkeepe.net, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://johnkeepe.net/nyc-police-precinct-and-census-data>.

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Diving into trends in shootings in the 67th Precinct, we found no clear trends on number of shootings by time of year. But we did find trends in times of day shootings occur. We found that shootings occurred more frequently in the evenings and early mornings (figure 9).

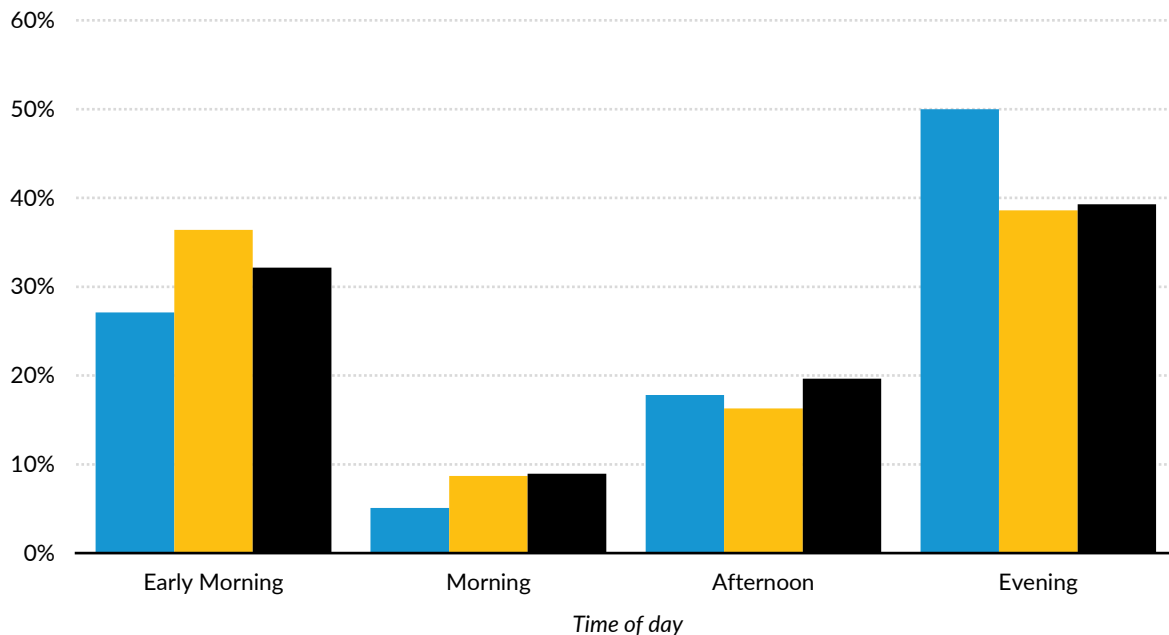
FIGURE 9

Most Shootings in the 67th Precinct Occur in the Evening and Early Morning

Shootings by time of day in the 67th Precinct before and after the start of the pandemic and in the past year

■ 2017 - 2019 ■ 2020 - 2022 ■ 2022

Percentage of shootings



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Source: Urban analysis of "NYPD Shooting Incident Data (Historic)," NYC Open Data, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Shooting-Incident-Data-Historic-/833y-fsy8>.

Notes: Existing literature often categorizes time of day as "Daytime" (6:00 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.) and "Nighttime" (6:00 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) (Klerman et al. 2023; Zawitz et al. 1993). We expanded on this approach by creating four categories. We defined "Early morning" as midnight to 5:59 a.m., "Morning" as 6:00 a.m. to 11:59 a.m., "Afternoon" as 12:00 p.m. to 5:59 p.m., and "Evening" as 6:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.

Community Insights on Gun Violence in and around the 67th Precinct

Community members who participated in interviews and focus groups generally agreed that gun violence is not as high as it was in the 1990s, but it is much more visible nowadays due to the internet and the media. Some participants were concerned about high levels of gun violence in the community, while others felt violence had decreased significantly and was not a major concern. Comparing this to crime and shooting statistics, there has been a consistent decline in crimes and shootings over the past two decades, but the 67th Precinct has one of the highest rates of crime and gun violence in the city. It is possible that this difference in opinions among community members owes to differences in people's exposure to gun violence based on where they live in the 67th Precinct and their social networks. Participants repeatedly said that young people are more involved in gun violence than they

have been historically. Some participants also said that gun violence seems to have become less targeted toward specific people and more random.

DRIVERS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Community members and anti-gun violence program staff pointed to many factors driving gun violence. Many community members who participated in interviews and focus groups felt that a lack of high-quality educational opportunities and out-of-school programming for young people lead them to become involved in gangs and gun violence. As one participant said, young people “have nothing better to do” than engage in violence or join a gang. Another said that young people “find that being in a gang is where they get attention, what they need to get from their family. The gangs serve as family; their parents don’t care. That is frightening.”¹² Other participants also said that parents are not sufficiently involved in their children’s lives, which leads them to engage in gun violence because no one is supervising them or serving as a positive role model for them. As one participant put it, “A lot of kids don’t have the mentorship that they need in order to not fall prey to the gangs.”¹³ In contrast, a member of the Public Safety Coalition noted that, of the shootings they were aware of over the last few months from when we spoke, most were not gang related. They instead felt a lack of conflict-resolution skills were a driving of violence.

The gangs serve as a family; their parents don’t care. That is frightening.

—67th Precinct community member

Community members mentioned several other reasons why young people engage in gun violence. Several participants argued that popular music and music videos glamorize violence, which makes it seem appealing to young people. One participant highlighted the role of peer pressure in encouraging young people to engage in gun violence. Additionally, many participants felt that poor mental health, particularly among young people, was a key driver of gun violence. They believed that a lack of social-emotional intelligence, combined with the accessibility of guns, often causes conflicts to escalate to gun violence. If guns were not so accessible, conflicts would result in fights instead of shootings (box 2 discusses recent changes to laws around gun possession and carrying in New York City). Anti-gun violence program staff also mentioned the ease of obtaining a gun and a lack of conflict-resolution skills as a driver of violence. Anti-gun violence program staff also expounded on young people’s

mental health challenges, emphasizing the heaving mental and emotional burdens some young people in the community carry.

BOX 2

Changes to Gun Possession and Carrying Laws in New York City

During our data collection for this study, the Supreme Court ruled on New York State's gun regulations. In 2022's *New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen*, the court found that New York State's gun ownership law was unconstitutional. Specifically, the "probable cause" requirement for obtaining a gun permit violated the Fourteenth Amendment by not allowing New York residents to exercise their Second Amendment rights.

Because the ruling was issued during our data collection, we reserved some questions in our interview and focus group protocols to ask community members about their perceptions of these changes. We spoke to residents shortly after the ruling, and there was a lack of awareness of the ruling and participants shared that it did not seem to be a large concern. However, findings may be different for projects that focus on community members' perceptions of changing gun laws in the future.

Source: Lisa Soronen, "SCOTUS Strikes Down 'Proper Cause' Requirement to Carry a Gun in Public," ICMA, June 24, 2022, <https://icma.org/blog-posts/scotus-strikes-down-proper-cause-requirement-carry-gun-public>.

Another driver of gun violence mentioned by some community members and anti-gun violence program staff was poverty. One participant pointed out that many parents in the community cannot afford to pay for after-school programs and child care for their children. Another said that poverty can hinder parents' ability to "manage the social and emotional well-being of [their] children because [they're] so focused on trying to make ends meet." Poverty may also lead people to seek "alternative routes" of making money, which could include or lead to gun violence. Anti-violence staff shared how a lack of financial means leads to food and housing insecurity and how violence is a response to that lack of resources. Anti-gun violence program staff who participated in interviews shared that lacking resources puts individuals and families in positions where they feel like they must constantly defend themselves and be on guard. Additionally, gangs present an option to help to make ends meet.

Other drivers of gun violence mentioned by participants included the prevalence of low-level crime in the community; businesses that some participants speculated may be fronts for criminal activity; and the weakening of ties between community members over the years, which participants felt was partially due to gentrification. There was debate among participants on the impact of the

legalization of recreational cannabis, which some participants felt was affecting the mental health of those who use it, while others felt this was not a driver of gun violence. Anti-gun violence program staff also noted domestic violence when discussing drivers of gun violence and emphasized that not all the gun violence in the community is gang related.

IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Urban's analysis of shooting statistics show a rise in gun violence during the pandemic, but there were mixed responses from community members who participated in focus groups and interviews on whether the pandemic increased or decreased gun violence. Participants felt that COVID-19 affected gun violence in several ways. Some participants reported that now that mask-wearing has become more common, people can wear masks to hide their identity while committing crimes and engaging in violence. Furthermore, many people in the community benefited from Paycheck Protection Program loans and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, but now that that economic support has dried up, there is more financial hardship, which participants believe has led to more gun violence. Lastly, participants said that COVID-related isolation measures created mental health problems that contributed to gun violence.

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

Participants suggested several possible ways to reduce gun violence. Participants in multiple focus groups believed that police should conduct more proactive community outreach to fight gun violence. Outreach would help reduce fear of the police and earn community members' trust, which could aid in investigations of gun violence cases. One participant explained, "If you see police officers in spaces that are noncombative and positive in your neighborhood, that's a good thing. Maybe for festivals, it's not just about policing the people but it's connecting with them as well."¹⁴ Stronger community engagement could also increase officers' knowledge of the communities they police. In a focus group with people who had been directly victimized by gun violence, participants took the ideas of cultural sensitivity and outreach further by saying that people from the community should be in charge of keeping it safe, since they best understand the dynamics and culture of their own community.

If you see police officers in spaces that are noncombative and positive in your neighborhood, that's a good thing. —67th Precinct community member

Participants in one focus group said that stronger community organizing, such as through block associations, could help stop gun violence by promoting stronger ties between community members and working with the police to inform them about safety concerns and follow up about gun violence

investigations. However, one participant in the focus group argued that if the police are unwilling to cooperate with the community, block associations would be unable to reduce gun violence: “Us having block associations to fight violence, the police is not working hand-in-hand with us, it’s just a waste of time; nothing is going to get done. For us to have a good relationship with them, they’re going to have to gain our trust. I’m sorry, they don’t work hard enough to do that.”¹⁵

Participants across focus groups believed that to help young people avoid gun violence, parents and other family members should be more involved in their lives, and more programming—both recreational and job-training programming—should be available for them. Some participants also highlighted the need for guns to be less accessible, particularly for young people.

Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Initiatives in the 67th Precinct

There are many anti-gun violence initiatives in the 67th Precinct run by law enforcement, prosecutors, the NYC government, and community members. To address gun violence, the New York City’s Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice and its Office to Prevent Gun Violence have invested in an array of initiatives to address gun violence in the 67th Precinct. These include public health approaches (e.g., the Crisis Management System),¹⁶ enforcement approaches (e.g., Project Fast Track, including the specialized Brooklyn Gun Court),¹⁷ and community cocreation of safety (e.g., the 67th Precinct Public Safety Coalition, or PSC).¹⁸ There are also law enforcement programs and community-led initiatives in the Precinct to address gun violence.

Criminal Legal System Anti-Gun Violence Strategies

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) use targeted enforcement strategies and community policing to address gun violence in the 67th Precinct. Enforcement strategies include the gang-member database and confiscation of illegal firearms. The NYPD engages community members through monthly community meetings as well as school programs and youth sports programs.¹⁹ In addition to these community engagement efforts, the NYPD also engages in “neighborhood policing,” which includes neighborhood coordination officers charged with building bonds with the communities they work in and neighborhood Build the Block meetings.²⁰ The NYPD also partners with the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office to sponsor gun buybacks.²¹ In the neighboring 73rd Precinct, the NYPD conducted a pull-out experiment in 2021 where it reduced police presence during set times of day in the neighborhood over a five-day period and inundated the community with community organizations in the place of police.²²

Project Fast Track was an initiative of the former New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio to address gun violence in Brooklyn. Project Fast Track is an initiative combining efforts of multiple local agencies to tackle gun possession cases. It was launched in 2016 and it spurred the creation of the Gun Violence Suppression Division in the NYPD as part of the Fast Track Initiative. The division focuses its attention on gun possession cases in 17 high-crime precincts, all while tracking gun recidivists and dismantling networks engaged in illegal gun trafficking and gun crime. As well as a dedicated division within the NYPD, this initiative also created a Gun Court in Brooklyn, the borough with the majority of gun possession arrests in New York City, as a way to expedite the review of criminal gun possession cases.²³

Community-led anti-gun violence staff we spoke with reported complex relationships with criminal legal system actors, stressing the importance of distinguishing their work from the criminal legal system while also acknowledging the importance of partnerships for access to data. Some anti-gun violence staff stated the importance of law enforcement in responding to gun violence. Other staff shared that their organization has no collaboration with any criminal legal system actors at all.

Community members who participated in focus groups and interviews generally expressed negative views of the police. One participant who had been a victim of gun violence²⁴ said that police treat people differently depending on “where you [are] from and what you look like....Your skin is your sin nowadays.”²⁵ Another participant perceived police in Manhattan to be friendlier than those in Brooklyn. Another who had been a victim of gun violence said, “We can do without [the police].”²⁶ When asked how police respond to shootings, participants said that police come to the scene of the shooting to take a report, but they generally do not follow up afterwards, and they are often quick to shoot when responding to gun violence. Participants across focus groups emphasized that there is a lack of trust in the police among community members, which can hinder investigations into gun violence because community members are reluctant to provide information to the police for fear of being arrested.

We can do without [the police]. —67th Precinct community member

Participants also expressed negative opinions of other criminal legal system actors. Some participants felt that judges and prosecutors have little knowledge of the communities over which

they have authority, which leads to discriminatory and disproportionate sentences. As one participant said, “They can’t be outsiders overseeing communities and people they don’t understand.”²⁷

The lack of trust between community members and criminal legal system actors speaks to the need for community-based anti-violence organizations. The distrust was only deepened with the murder of George Floyd by law enforcement.²⁸ Some interviewees from community-based organizations expressed that diffusing conflict between system actors and the community was one of the roles they played. We describe anti-gun violence efforts in the 67th Precinct in the next section.

Community-Led Anti-Gun Violence Strategies

There are several community-led anti-gun violence strategies and programs in the 67th Precinct, including strategies that involve working with the government and criminal legal system actors and ones that do not.

Most community-led anti-gun violence strategies fall into the category of public health interventions. The public health model of violence intervention is built on the idea that violence and its impacts spread like a virus and is a public health issue (Jannetta et al. 2022). While these interventions may partner with criminal legal system actors, they are staffed by people outside of the criminal legal system—often people with experiences that allow them to relate better to the populations they serve as credible messengers (Jannetta et al. 2022). A scan of literature on public health interventions found that these interventions typically define success as achieving a reduction in violence by providing alternatives to violence and tend to focus on populations most at risk of being perpetrators or victims of violence. These programs are also often reliant on a high level of trust from the communities they serve (Matei et al. 2022).

THE 67TH PRECINCT PUBLIC SAFETY COALITION

The 67th Precinct PSC, also known as the 67th Precinct Clergy Council and the GodSquad, is a unique faith-based community mobilization effort against gun violence that launched in 2010 and includes clergy, community groups, and neighborhood leaders that partner with the mayor’s office and other criminal legal system actors including the 67th Precinct.²⁹ The coalition serves as a liaison between the community and law enforcement, trains faith leaders in gun violence prevention, engages with young people at risk of engaging in gun violence, and provides services to victims of gun violence and their families.³⁰ The PSC responds to calls about gunshot victims and their families through hospital visits, counseling, prayer vigils, community walks, gun violence forums, and bereavement services. In 2021,

the coalition partnered with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office to engage with community members on the ground in the community following acts of gun violence to provide services to victims and their family members and to provide support and guidance to young people at risk of engaging in gun violence or being victims of gun violence.³¹

There is a dearth of literature on faith-based anti-gun violence models, but the 67th Precinct Clergy Council is working to fill the knowledge gap through their holistic approach to gun violence prevention and reduction. The PSC model is interfaith, acknowledging that gun violence spans across all faiths. PSC members shared the importance of acknowledging the unique role clergy play in communities, particularly in response to tragedy. Having clergy involved allows the intervention to support community members through every stage of grief including hosting funerals, which is unique to faith-based models. PSC members also discussed the role of faith leaders as a bridge between community members and law enforcement.

When there is a shooting, the PSC receives a notification from the Office of Neighborhood Safety and the 67th Precinct. The PSC responds appropriately depending on the nature of the shooting. PSC members will respond on scene and works to make a quick connection with the victim and/or their family to provide support. PSC members also engage with and provide support to the person that caused harm. The PSC provides bereavement services in situations where a victim has died. In addition to the funeral, this includes wraparound services such as counseling. The PSC also introduces the family to Mothers for Safer Cities and connects them to detectives to ensure the family receives updates about the investigation.

In addition to responses to shootings, the PSC includes several programs. The NextGen program engages justice-involved young people age 18 to 24 through calls and visits, with a goal of getting them on a positive path. This work also includes weekly workshops engages participants in topics such as trauma, and financial management. The Flatbush Leadership Academy serves young people age 14 to 24, teaching life skills, and providing career development, resume drafting support, and job placement with pastors in the PSC network. As part of this academy, participants identify a problem in the community and propose a solution which they present to elected officials. Participants in this program receive a weekly stipend.³² The Single Parents University provides monthly meetings and workshops to single parents and their families. Some topics covered include career management, goal setting, stress management, positive parenting.³³ The coalition also includes Mothers for Safer Cities, a peer support network of parents who have lost children to gun violence.³⁴

The PSC also leads the national Clergy for Safer Cities network and collaborated with other antiviolence initiatives across the nation in this network to develop a framework for establishing a clergy group to address violence (Clergy for Safe Cities 2021).

THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The NYC government supports two community anti-violence initiatives in the 67th Precinct: the PSC (described above) and the Crisis Management System. The Crisis Management System adapted the Cure Violence model of violence interruption in 22 sites across the city, including the 67th Precinct, to respond to neighborhood conflict with resources for healing, deescalation, and supportive networks, particularly for young adults with risk factors for victimization and engaging in violence.³⁵

INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY-LED ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to these initiatives, we identified five other community-led initiatives operating in the 67th Precinct: East Flatbush Village, Elite Learners, KAVI, Man Up!, and Save Our Streets.

East Flatbush Village is a nonprofit organization that focuses on community development and enrichment. Its violence work supports young people through recreation activities, educational tools, and mentors.³⁶

Elite Learners is a nonprofit organization that focuses on youth mentorship and community development. Elite Learners provide a range of support services to NYC students that are primarily in low-income and high-crime communities. Elite Learners' anti-violence work centers around three programs: conflict mediation, responder services at Brookdale University Hospital, and crisis management workshops at Rikers Island.³⁷

KAVI is a youth-serving organization doing work grounded in a public health approach "to prevent and eliminate interpersonal violence from the lives of young people through advocacy, peer leadership, community mobilization, and social justice." KAVI operates programs within the Crisis Management System and operates interventions in the community, schools, and hospitals, including a hospital-based violence intervention program based in the Kings County Medical Center. KAVI staff also engage in advocacy for legislation for the communities they serve.³⁸ Finally, KAVI engages in research and served as a partner for this study.

Man Up! is a long-standing community organization founded in 2004. In the aftermath of the loss of 8-year-old Daesean Hill to gun violence, Man Up! played a key role in the development of the Crisis

Management System in 2013. Man Up! provides services across eight pillars: youth, community, sports and recreation, music and arts, employment, anti-gun violence, fatherhood, and recovery.³⁹

Save Our Streets is an intervention operating in central Brooklyn just outside of East Flatbush. It is focused on prevention of violence and modeled after the Chicago Cure Violence program. Staff work to intervene in and defuse conflicts before they escalate to violence. The program also provides mentoring to young people at risk of committing or being victims of violence and links them to services. The organization also includes a youth leadership arm.⁴⁰

Common Themes across Community-Led Anti-Gun Violence Strategies

Through interviews and focus groups with anti-gun violence staff, we found that community initiatives include different combinations of prevention and intervention activities. Anti-gun violence programs implement a multifaceted approach to address and mitigate the pervasive issue of gun violence. One critical strategy involves the provision of emotional-regulation and conflict-resolution classes, equipping individuals with the skills to navigate conflicts peacefully and manage their emotions effectively. These organizations are engaging in direct dialogue with gangs, aiming to deescalate tensions and resolve underlying issues. Furthermore, their involvement in schools, coupled with community events such as movie nights and skate nights, not only educates and engages young people but also fosters a sense of community and belonging. Emphasizing workforce development activities, these organizations strive to offer avenues for economic stability and growth, providing individuals with opportunities and skills for a brighter future. Additionally, their presence in detention centers is pivotal, as they work to rehabilitate and guide individuals away from paths that could lead to further violence, offering support and mentorship within these challenging environments. Collectively, these strategies underline a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of violence while providing support, education, and guidance to prevent and counteract the perpetuation of gun-related issues in communities.

A common theme across anti-gun violence organizations was the importance of partnerships. These organizations collaborate with a plethora of other community-based organizations, such as schools, the offices of elected officials, small businesses, other antiviolenace organizations, salons, and barber shops.

In the intricate landscape of addressing gun violence, multiple organizations are actively engaged, each contributing unique strategies and approaches to mitigate the pervasive issue. These organizations play a crucial role in diffusing tensions between communities and law enforcement,

often acting as intermediaries, physically placing themselves between the two to ease strained relationships. Embracing restorative justice approaches, these groups facilitate community restorative circles, seeking to heal divisions and foster understanding through dialogue and reconciliation. Recognizing the mental and emotional toll of gun violence, these organizations offer coaching and mental health support tailored to address trauma, guiding individuals through their healing journeys. Moreover, they serve as crucial connectors, linking victims of gun violence to essential resources such as grief support, creating a network of assistance and care to aid in the recovery process. Through these various approaches, these organizations demonstrate a holistic commitment not only to addressing the immediate consequences of gun violence but also to promoting healing, understanding, and reconciliation in affected communities.

Barriers and Opportunities for Community-Led Anti-Gun Violence Strategies

Dealing with the persistent and disheartening reality of ongoing violence remains a formidable challenge, demanding resilience and perseverance. However, these organizations have perceived pockets of progress, notably in initiatives targeting young people, showcasing the potential for positive change.

Key barriers for anti-gun violence programs that we identified through interviews and focus groups with anti-gun violence staff and community members include a need for more funding, a lack of supports for staff, a lack of visibility, and a lack of housing for people in crisis. Anti-gun violence organizations face a critical need for resources to grow operations and collaborate with other antiviolence organizations. Within the grant-funded landscape, antiviolence organizations seek opportunities for growth, emphasizing the need for avenues that enable them to expand their initiatives and sustain their vital work. Increased funding holds the key to preventing territorial behaviors among organizations, fostering an environment that promotes collaboration rather than competition. This collaboration is essential for a more unified and effective approach in tackling gun violence.

Resources are also needed to support anti-gun violence staff in coping with the burnout and trauma inherent in their roles. Offering robust support mechanisms for these organizations' staff becomes paramount to ensure their mental and emotional well-being. These supports require funding.

In addition to supporting the existing workforce, funding is needed to hire more staff. The mere presence of antiviolence workers and organizations in communities has proven to be a deterrent, prompting potential shooters to rethink their actions upon encountering them. Recognizing the

significance of personnel, these groups understand the need to have sufficient staff to effectively carry out their missions, envisioning the addition of more members to further propel their impactful work.

Community members who participated in focus groups and interviews were generally unaware of the community-based organizations in the 67th Precinct doing work to reduce gun violence. In a focus group with people who had been directly victimized by gun violence, participants were unaware of any organizations besides KAVI, which had recruited them for the focus group. Some participants in other focus groups were aware of Man Up! because its staff engaged in highly visible street outreach. A few other participants had heard of Save Our Streets, a program employing violence interruption and creating educational and employment opportunities to combat neighborhood-level gun violence. Participants across focus groups agreed that antiviolence organizations are not visible enough in the community. Some may have physical locations, but one participant said that the offices are frequently closed and speculated that this may be due to a lack of funding. Visibility in the community requires a lot of staff. Storefront locations that people can see when walking around the neighborhood also help. Both these things are expensive for antiviolence programs.

Due to a lack of awareness about these programs, community members who participated in focus groups and interviews had limited opinions of the programs' effectiveness. Participants who were aware of KAVI had a positive opinion of it and reported that the staff were responsive to their needs while they were in the hospital and helped them persist through the rehabilitation process. One participant was also aware of Man Up! and had a positive view of its work in the community.

Lastly, antiviolence program staff noted the pressing need for increased access to housing for individuals experiencing crises, a resource vital for stabilizing and supporting those affected by the repercussions of gun violence. By addressing these resource needs, anti-gun violence organizations can better equip themselves to navigate the challenges and complexities inherent in their mission to create safer and more resilient communities.

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The multitiered supports that anti-gun violence organizations provided grew, in part, out of challenges that COVID presented. Anti-gun violence organizations had to make changes to their operations due to COVID. The pandemic led to increased fear and hardships for their communities. They worked to ensure community members had their needs met through efforts such as food pantries and community events. Anti-gun violence organizations worked with the barriers and opportunities that COVID presented. For example, interviewees reported there was an increase in creative and

entrepreneurial pursuits due to COVID; a number of anti-gun violence organizations have programming to channel those creative pursuits, such as the God Squad, which has a program that incubates entrepreneurs. In the spirit of the innovation needed during the pandemic, anti-gun violence organizations continue to envision new ways to support community needs.

Conclusion

Rates of crime and gun violence are high in the 67th Precinct, though there are other communities in Brooklyn with higher rates. Additionally, several community members noted that, while the neighborhood has historically been violent, that has been changing. Community members and antigun violence staff identified drivers of violence in the community as poverty and a lack of resources and opportunities, a lack of education and enrichment opportunities, unaddressed mental health needs, a lack of skills in peaceful conflict resolution, the increased ease of obtaining a gun, and the influence of current media including music and video games. Community members and antiviolence staff also noted strengths of the community, including the tapestry of diverse small businesses, community events, and the collaborative nature of the community. However, several community members noted that gentrification is eating away at those strengths.

Many different gun violence prevention, interruption, and intervention initiatives exist in the 67th Precinct, including those led by criminal legal system actors and those led by community members. All of these initiatives have seen some success but are also hampered by many barriers. Community-led initiatives struggle with a limited amount of grant funding, which sometimes results in a competitive instead of collaborative environment among organizations in the antiviolence space. More funding would also help these organizations hire enough staff and support staff to prevent burnout. Visibility also hampers these organizations in making strides to prevent violence in the communities they work in. Staff also noted that a lack of housing for those in crisis is a barrier. Despite these barriers, these organizations are making an impact through data-driven strategies that are tailored to the needs of the communities they work in.

Limitations

This study was limited by delays, access to data, and recruitment challenges. A combination of bureaucratic barriers and the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in delays to the start of the project and pauses to the work throughout the project. The community of focus for the study changed

substantially between 2018 (when the solicitation was released) and 2022, when most of the qualitative data collection occurred and some community members questioned the decision to focus on the area—no longer viewing it as an area plagued by gun violence. Additionally, delays throughout the project led to a rushed timeline at the end, which prevented the project team from holding in-person events with community members to share findings and codevelop recommendations.

Despite the invaluable support of KAVI, we struggled to recruit community members and antiviolence program staff for interviews and focus groups. This is likely due to already high demands on people's time and a lack of recognition of KAVI in the community. KAVI staff also noted that coordination with other organizations presented a challenging logistical barrier. We also faced issues garnering participation from more vulnerable groups for in-person focus groups due to adverse weather at the scheduled time of one of the focus groups. Difficulty recruiting participants may also have owed to the type and quality of messaging around Cure Violence. Residents, even those directly involved in and impacted by violence-elimination efforts, are not aware of the benefits of participating in research and evaluation studies. Equally, the messaging about public safety often demonizes the communities most impacted by violence while saying little to nothing about the systemic and systematic variables that create and sustain the environment that provides facilitators for violence. The confluence of the factors of poor messaging, limited understanding about the benefit and impact of participating in evaluation and research studies, and generations of poor political and government responses has left many residents unaware and reluctant to contribute in this (and other) studies.

Lastly, barriers to accessing crime and shooting data resulted in our relying on publicly available data for our quantitative analysis.

Recommendations

Based on our research findings, we have come up with five recommendations for gun violence prevention and intervention work. We have tied each general recommendation with specific recommendations for the 67th Precinct. Many of the recommendations for the precinct require investment. Government resources are finite, so these recommendations are aimed at identifying the most impactful investments for addressing gun violence in the 67th Precinct.

Recommendation 1: Rely on Evidence to Target Research, Funding, and Initiatives to the Areas Most in Need

Local governments should use a combination of crime and shooting statistics as well as community input to identify and routinely assess areas that would be best served by research, funding, and gun violence prevention and intervention initiatives. Analysis of crime and shooting data shows that there are other precincts that have higher rates of violent crime and shootings than the 67th. Additionally, while community members recognize that the area has historically been seen as one of the neighborhoods with the most gun violence in New York City, many community members shared that they do not see the neighborhoods in the 67th Precinct that way currently. Combining statistics with knowledge of community perceptions (obtained through surveys or focus groups) will help governments identify the areas most in need of support to address violence.

Recommendation 2: Leverage and Grow the Existing Strengths of Communities

All communities have strengths that can be leveraged to support antiviolence efforts, such as strong community ties or thriving local business communities. Identifying and investing in these strengths can aid antiviolence efforts by improving community cohesion and the tangible resources available to community members. If a community has a rich cultural history but lacks ways to engage with that history and share it with others, a museum (for instance, the Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, DC) can raise up this history and build pride in the community around it. If local businesses are a strength of a community, supporting them to ensure their sustainability through investment and by strengthening the business improvement district may be a way to leverage that strength. If a community has many resources available to people (e.g., antiviolence groups, mental health services, grocery stores, food pantries, child care), developing an accessible, user-friendly guide to those resources may help community members find them and help antiviolence organizations understand and leverage them. **In East Flatbush, invest in the community in ways that highlight existing resources, strengthen social ties, and support small locally owned business.** The cultural richness and historical significance of East Flatbush, and the flow of resources into it, present opportunities for growth and development in the neighborhood, but the role of gentrification there may be breaking down the area's strengths. Leveraging these strengths through growth instead may help combat gun violence. Identifying all the local resources available and helping community members find them can aid in this. Capital Planning Explorer⁴¹ already compiles a list of resources, such as libraries, schools, and transportation in New York City, but it is missing many local community resources, such as local businesses and restaurants, and it is not very user-friendly. KAVI staff are

considering developing a more comprehensive and more user-friendly mobile application. Another way to leverage these strengths is to invest in small businesses over big chain stores through grants and other government incentives and supports. There also already exist a culture of collaboration and strong community ties in East Flatbush. Building more green space and bike paths to complement the walkability and accessibility of the neighborhood and increasing the number of public community events may help these community ties flourish and grow.

Recommendation 3: Identify and Address Drivers of Gun Violence

When designing programs or identifying programs to fund, consider the drivers of gun violence and the specific needs of the community a program operates in. Organizations working to start programs should hold these considerations when they design them. Organizations with existing programs should assess how well those programs align with local needs and make revisions as needed. Governments should identify and invest in programs that specifically address drivers of gun violence in communities. **In East Flatbush, invest in mental health care as well as education and enrichment opportunities for young people that teach social-emotional skills and peaceful conflict resolution.** Community members and anti-gun violence program staff noted a lack of social-emotional skills and conflict-resolution skills among young people as a driver of gun violence. Community members also noted that COVID took a toll on the community's mental health. Additionally, gun violence is traumatic, leading people to try to cope in unhealthy ways that can further the cycle of violence.

Recommendation 4: Develop Funding Opportunities for Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs That Encourage Collaboration and Visibility in the Community

Areas with many interventions may struggle with competition in grant funding environments. A competitive environment among anti-gun violence programs and a lack of visibility may be the two biggest barriers faced by community-led gun violence interventions in the 67th Precinct. **In East Flatbush, the New York City government should develop funding mechanisms that support collaboration among programs as opposed to competition and that are sufficient to support staffing needs and increase programs' visibility. Colleges could also have a role in supporting staffing and visibility.** One way to increase visibility and community knowledge of programs, while supporting staffing for them, is for anti-gun violence programs to collaborate with local colleges, such as Brooklyn College. In addition to these programs being present at career fairs, internships where

students receive college credit and/or stipends could benefit students by providing real-life work experience and benefit the organizations by providing staffing and technical support and raising awareness of their organizations. Other ways anti-gun violence programs can increase their presence in the community include hosting and attending local events, attending and presenting at local community meetings, and canvassing. Storefront offices are also a great way to increase awareness, but the cost of these locations may be prohibitive. Encouraging the building of coalitions, such as the PSC, and providing funding to coalitions is another way to encourage collaboration and resource sharing in efficient and effective ways among anti-gun violence programs.

Recommendation 5: Invest in Community Engagement and Cultural Competency for Law Enforcement and Other Criminal Legal System Actors

Community members who participated in focus groups and interviews expressed a desire for police to establish a friendly, noncombative presence in their community and for judges and prosecutors to better understand the culture and dynamics of the community. Community-based anti-gun violence organizations, some of which already partner with criminal legal system actors, can be helpful in providing trainings based on the lessons they learn from working with the community. **In East Flatbush, ask community members how law enforcement can best engage with the community and focus community engagement efforts on other criminal legal system actors.** There are many community engagement strategies that already exists for the NYPD, but it is unclear whether and how they foster a trusting relationship. Community members also noted that prosecutors and judges seem out of touch with the communities they serve. Efforts to build community trust with criminal legal system actors should include prosecutors and judges in addition to law enforcement.

Notes

- ¹ "NYPD Shooting Incident Data (Historic)," NYC Open Data, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Shooting-Incident-Data-Historic-/833y-fsy8>.
- ² "NYPD Shooting Incident Data (Historic)," NYC Open Data, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Shooting-Incident-Data-Historic-/833y-fsy8>; "Historical New York City Crime Data," New York City Police Department, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/crime-statistics/historical.page>.
- ³ John Keepe. "Sharing NC Police Precinct Data," Johnkeepe.net, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://johnkeefe.net/nyc-police-precinct-and-census-data>.
- ⁴ "Community Health Profiles," New York City Health, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://a816-health.nyc.gov/hdi/profiles/>.
- ⁵ "Community Health Profiles," New York City Health.
- ⁶ "Community Health Profiles," New York City Health.
- ⁷ "Brooklyn, 'City of Churches,'" Urban Archive, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.urbanarchive.org/stories/hp4BXCNW8nY>.
- ⁸ "Community Health Profiles," New York City Health.
- ⁹ "Community Health Profiles," New York City Health.
- ¹⁰ "Community Health Profiles," New York City Health.
- ¹¹ Rose Adams, "East Flatbush has less parkland than any other neighborhood in NYC," *Brooklyn Paper*, April 7, 2021, <https://www.brooklynpaper.com/east-flatbush-parkland-district-nyc-report/>.
- ¹² Focus group with community members.
- ¹³ Focus group with community members.
- ¹⁴ Focus group with community members.
- ¹⁵ Focus group with community members.
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About the Authors

Lily Robin is a senior research associate in the Justice and Safety Division at the Urban Institute, where they lead projects related to community safety and wellness, community violence prevention and intervention programs, policing, juvenile justice, and disability in the criminal legal system. Their work focuses on mixed-methods and community engaged evaluations of programs related to community safety and wellbeing. Robin holds a master of public policy from the George Washington University and a bachelor of arts focused on the school-to-prison pipeline from New York University.

Josh Fording is a research analyst in the Justice and Safety Division. His research and technical assistance primarily focus on crime victimization and violence prevention in the United States and Mexico.

Travis Reginal is a research associate in the Justice and Safety Division. He is interested in the intersection of deviance, race, and class, as well as the use of emotional intelligence programs to prevent crime and reduce recidivism. He graduated from Yale University with a BA in sociology and a concentration in African American and education studies.

Paige Thompson is a senior research associate in the Justice and Safety Division. Her research work focuses on interventions and policies aimed at reducing gun and group-related violence and increasing community safety, responsible fatherhood research and program evaluation, and police-community relations. She holds a BA with distinction in psychology and women, gender, and sexuality from the University of Virginia and an MA in criminology, law, and society, with a concentration in policy and practice, from George Mason University.

Andreea Matei is a senior policy associate in the Justice and Safety Division, where her work focuses on prosecutorial discretion and decisionmaking, public defense quality, restorative justice, long sentences, and youth alternatives to justice involvement. She believes in creating safety, rehabilitation, and accountability outside the criminal justice system and investing in communities supports and services. Matei holds a BA in history and political science from the University of Michigan and an MPP from the Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan.

Jerome Louison is the data and evaluation manager for Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI). An eight-year veteran of the nonprofit industry, Louison is committed to using data analytics to innovate new community development practices. He completed his bachelor's in mathematics from Brooklyn College in 2015 and his master's in applied urban science and informatics from New York University in 2020. Louison enjoys exploring new museums and being in nature in his spare time.

Ramik Jamar Williams is the co-executive director for Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI). He is an expert, advocate, and champion in K-16 Education and Workforce & Youth Development. Williams has dedicated his career to eliminating racial disparities in economic, educational and health systems for communities of color. He has grounded this work by leading organizations, programs and initiatives designed to increase the activation of and investment in oppressed communities. Prior to joining KAVI, he held executive and senior positions in philanthropic, research institutions and service organizations. Williams holds a BA in history and secondary education and has completed graduate work in public administration, public affairs, and nonprofit management.

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