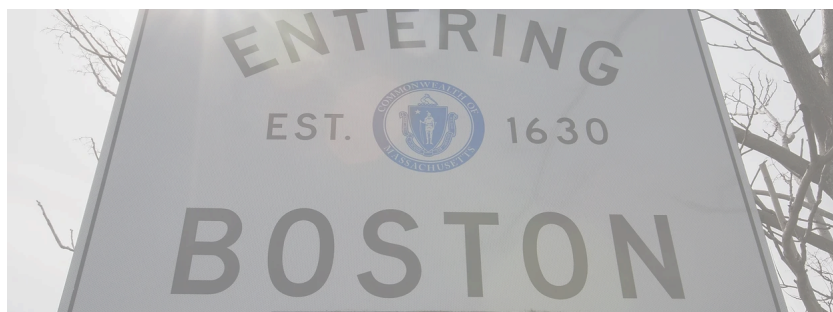


Community Violence



Gun violence in the US is not distributed equally across all communities. Gun homicides and assaults are overwhelmingly concentrated in predominantly Black and Brown urban neighborhoods.⁽¹⁾ It is estimated that more than 13,000 people are killed in a gun homicide each year,⁽²⁾ and more than half of those killed are Black men, despite making up only 7% of the US population.⁽³⁾ In Boston, researchers have found that more than half of all gun violence incidents occur within just 3% of the city's streets.⁽⁴⁾

These racial disparities in gun violence rates are the result of centuries of deliberate policy choices that created racially segregated neighborhoods that are underfunded and under-supported by policymakers. Gun violence is a symptom of deeper issues: racism, poverty, trauma, and lack of opportunity. This is why we see higher rates of gun violence in communities of color - policymakers have intentionally created neighborhoods with high rates of poverty, poorly funded schools, and high rates of over policing.⁽⁵⁾

While these numbers are stark, it is important to highlight the resilience and strength of the Black and Brown communities that have been dealing with gun violence for decades. In every community that suffers from high rates of gun violence, there are individuals and organizations coming together to address the root causes of gun violence and the trauma it leaves behind. All too often, individuals and organizations engaged in this work do not receive meaningful or sustained support from funders or government entities. We will not be able to end gun violence without letting the communities that are the most impacted by this issue lead the way on solutions, and then making meaningful investments in those community driven programs

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Community-based violence impacts entire neighborhoods, not just the individuals involved in the shooting. For every life lost to gun violence, there is a family and a community left behind. Every instance of gun violence leaves behind lasting trauma and grief for entire communities. This is particularly detrimental to the well-being of children. It's estimated that more than 3 million children each year witness violence in some form, and Black and Brown children are significantly more likely to witness violence than their white peers.⁽⁶⁾ Exposure to violence at a young age increases an individual's likelihood of dealing with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse, and decreases academic performance.⁽⁷⁾ This, alongside the systemic inequities described above, perpetuates the conditions that lead to gun violence, further fueling the systems that perpetuate harm.


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Black and Latinx people make up

MA cities including Boston, New Bedford,

Black children are 10x more likely to be killed by a gun

less than 20% of the population in Massachusetts, yet account for nearly 80% of gun violence homicide victims.⁽⁹⁾

Worcester, and Springfield saw a more than 50% increase in gun violence in 2020.⁽¹⁰⁾

than white children, and gun violence is the leading cause of death for Black children in the US.⁽¹¹⁾

Research has found that redlining, the policy of denying home loans to those living in or even near predominantly Black neighborhoods, is connected to increased rates of gun violence. ⁽¹³⁾ While redlining is now technically illegal, this demonstrates the prolonged impact that structural oppression has on communities of color.

We can also clearly see the impact of structural oppression in the link between gun violence and Covid-19. As Covid-19 spread in 2020 we saw a surge in gun violence across the country. While we are still waiting for full data to be released from the CDC, researchers at Everytown estimate that gun homicides and accidental shootings rose 25%, and the total number of gun deaths may be at its highest in recent decades.⁽¹²⁾ Covid-19 disproportionately impacted people of color, and further exacerbated existing inequities that fueled this spike in gun violence. Addressing the root causes of gun violence will address existing inequities and improve public health overall.

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The Coalition believes that addressing the root causes of gun violence must be at the core of any approach to this issue. Through our legislative advocacy, community organizing, and educational efforts, we work to create a world free from racism, poverty, and trauma, which will in turn create a world that is free from gun violence.

As noted earlier, this country's history of racist policy making, such as redlining, has worked to create and maintain the racial and economic inequities that are at the root of high levels of gun violence. Policy making that is anti-racist and centers the wisdom of impacted communities can help to rectify that. There are bills on both the state and federal level that are steps forward in the work to address and rectify these inequities, and the Coalition identifies those advocacy opportunities with deep input and leadership from our member organizations, survivors of gun violence, and front line workers.

One of the most effective ways to reduce the trauma of gun violence is to adequately fund the organizations who are doing the day-to-day outreach and violence interruption work. Massachusetts has a great deal of community-based organizations that are doing incredible work with the communities most impacted by gun violence. You'll find a number of these organizations on our member organizations list.

Community-based violence prevention programs are proven to reduce gun violence and improve outcomes for those most at risk of perpetrating or experiencing gun violence.

Hospital based violence intervention programs engage survivors of gun violence while they are still in the hospital to address an individual's needs, provide ongoing support, and address the social determinants of health that are at the heart of gun violence. A study of a hospital based violence intervention program in Chicago found that youth and young

adults engaged in these services were significantly less likely to report being a victim of additional violence in the following 6 months, and research on another similar program found that engagement with these services reduced misdemeanor offenses significantly.⁽¹⁴⁾

There are also programs that provide case management services, mental health support, and educational resources to young people at risk of being involved in gun violence. These programs seek to address the root causes of gun violence, ensuring that young people have the resources needed to feel safe and well in the world.

The Coalition's legislative and budget advocacy is focused on addressing the root causes of gun violence. Many of the bills we support are centered around improving the well-being of young people in the Commonwealth and reducing trauma. [Find out more here.](#)

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