

REPORT SEP 23, 2024

# 2024 Sees Smallest Summer Surge in Gun Violence Rates in 6 Years

Gun violence rose less in the summer of 2024 than in years past—another promising sign that the nation is getting safer—but work still needs to be done.

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A member of the Students Demand Action National Advisory Board addresses a rally outside the U.S. Capitol on May 26, 2022, in Washington, D.C. (Getty/Chip Somodevilla)

All signs are pointing to Americans being safer from gun violence than they have been since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, the FBI released its full-year National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 2023, showing 2023 had one of the most significant single-year murder rate declines in the country's history.<sup>1</sup> Although this report represents the most accurate estimate available of national crime trends, 2024 data are not captured in the release. Earlier this year,

the Center for American Progress released analysis<sup>2</sup> showing that violent crime and gun violence are continuing to drop in 2024, supported by multiple data sources, including the FBI's first-quarter report on violent crime;<sup>3</sup> data from 277 major U.S. cities;<sup>4</sup> and, most recently, an August 2024 report from the Major Cities Chiefs Association.<sup>5</sup> Although capturing crime and gun violence data in real time has its limitations,<sup>6</sup> the consistency with which declines are being reported by the FBI, local police, and independent third-party sources should give everyone cautious optimism that many American communities are safer today than they were four years ago. While this is good news, any life lost to gun violence is one too many and officials can't lose sight of the much-needed investments to keep people safer.

Despite the encouraging evidence that violent crime and gun violence are going down at historic rates, gun homicides historically have peaked in the warmer months,<sup>7</sup> leading crime data experts to closely track gun violence through the 2024 summer to determine whether it would disrupt the overall positive trend. As fall approaches, a new CAP analysis of data from the Gun Violence Archives (GVA) shows that 2024 had the smallest summertime increase in gun violence victimizations—defined as all fatal and nonfatal gun injuries—since the summer of 2018.

This finding is yet another sign that the nation has turned a corner on its approach to preventing violent crime and interpersonal gun violence, with some major U.S. cities now safer than they were before the pandemic.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, this success is not universal: Some major cities are not only lagging behind the public safety gains the nation is broadly experiencing but are seeing levels of gun violence go up in their communities.

Key findings include:

- In the 300 most populated U.S. cities, year-to-date (YTD) gun violence homicides are down 14.7 percent compared with 2023.
- 2024 saw the smallest summer surge in gun violence victimization rates since 2018. Between May 2024 and August 2024, gun violence victimization rates rose by 25.7 percent nationally compared with January 2024 through April 2024. In the previous six years, gun violence victimization rates rose 38 percent on average between May and August compared with between January and April.
- YTD gun violence victimizations are still up 10.4 percent compared with 2019 across the 300 most populous U.S. cities.

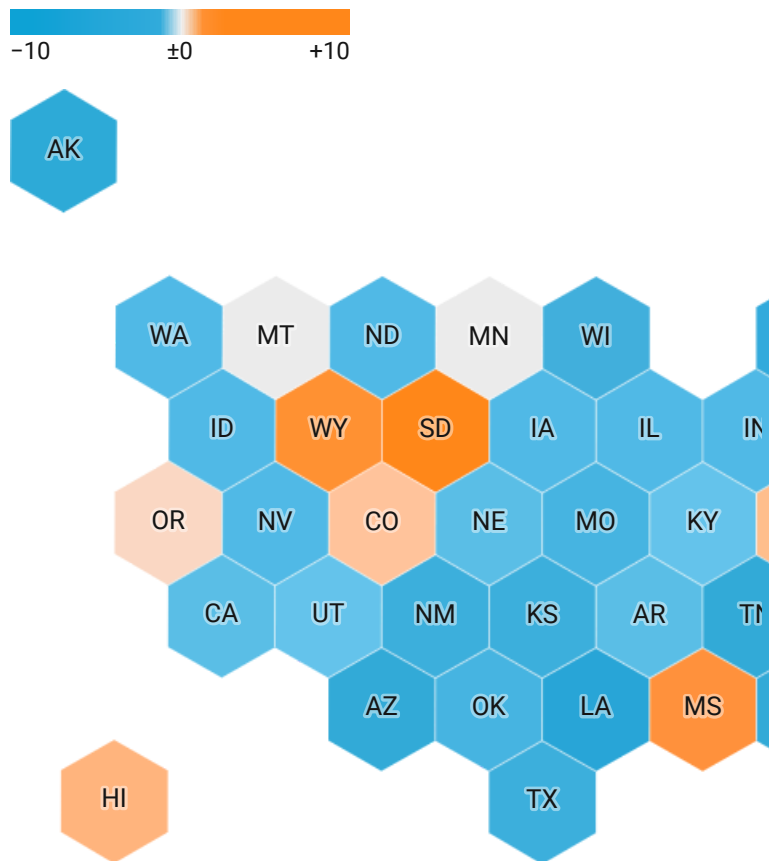
FIGURE 1



## 38 U.S. states and the District of Columbia have fewer gun homicides in 2024 year to date (YTD)

YTD changes in population-adjusted total gun homicides for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, January 1–August 31, 2023–2024

Change



Hover or click to see values.

Note: In the Center for American Progress' analysis of Gun Violence Archive data, the population-adjusted rate is equivalent to victimizations per 100,000 residents. The District of Columbia has seen 8.1 fewer gun homicides in 2024 year to date than in 2023 year to date.

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Gun Violence Archive, available at <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/> (last accessed September 10, 2024).

Map data: [Tilegrams/NPR](#)

Map: Center for American Progress

FIGURE 2



## Gun violence victimizations are down 14.3 percent in the 50 most populous U.S. cities in 2024 compared with 2023 year to date (YTD)

YTD change in total gun victimizations for 50 most populous U.S. cities, January 1–August 31, 2023–2024

Search by city

Mesa, Arizona	-51.5%	
Virginia Beach, Virginia	-48%	
El Paso, Texas	-43.1%	
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	-39.4%	
Bakersfield, California	-38.8%	
San Diego, California	-36.8%	
Denver, Colorado	-34.3%	
Columbus, Ohio	-34.2%	
Fresno, California	-30.5%	
Fort Worth, Texas	-30.4%	
Baltimore, Maryland	-29.5%	
Portland, Oregon	-28.4%	
Omaha, Nebraska	-27.2%	
Jacksonville, Florida	-26%	
Washington, District of Columbia	-25....	
Dallas, Texas	-22....	
Houston, Texas	-22...	
Phoenix, Arizona	-21...	
San Antonio, Texas	-21...	
Las Vegas, Nevada	-2...	
Tulsa, Oklahoma	-2....	
San Francisco, California	-2....	
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	-1...	
Aurora, Colorado	-1...	
Detroit, Michigan		-16.1%
Oakland, California		-14.7%
Indianapolis, Indiana		-12.4%
New York, New York		-9.9%
Seattle, Washington		-8.1%
Atlanta, Georgia		-8.1%

Albuquerque, New Mexico	-8%
Raleigh, North Carolina	-8%
Chicago, Illinois	-5.9%
San Jose, California	-4%
Minneapolis, Minnesota	-3.8%
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	-2.9%
Austin, Texas	-2.4%
Miami, Florida	±0%
Louisville, Kentucky	+2.5%
Kansas City, Missouri	+2.7%
Sacramento, California	+3.1%
Boston, Massachusetts	+4.5%
Los Angeles, California	+5.9%
Memphis, Tennessee	+7%
Colorado Springs, Colorado	+7.4%
Tucson, Arizona	+7.7%
Nashville, Tennessee	+8%
Long Beach, California	+21...
Tampa, Florida	+22...
Charlotte, North Carolina	+66%

*Note: In the Center for American Progress' analysis of Gun Violence Archive data, gun violence victimizations are defined as all firearm-related deaths and injuries.*

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Gun Violence Archive, "Home," available at <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/> (last accessed September 10, 2024).

Table: Center for American Progress

## Most major American cities see smaller summer surge

Historically, gun violence victimization rates in America peak between May and August each year.<sup>9</sup> Although some evidence shows that hotter temperatures<sup>10</sup> and extreme heat<sup>11</sup> may contribute to the rise in gun violence during these warmer months, other data suggest the increase is primarily a product of adults

spending more time outdoors and being more socially active.<sup>12</sup> As the frequency of interactions outdoors increases, so does the frequency of interactions that turn violent.<sup>13</sup>

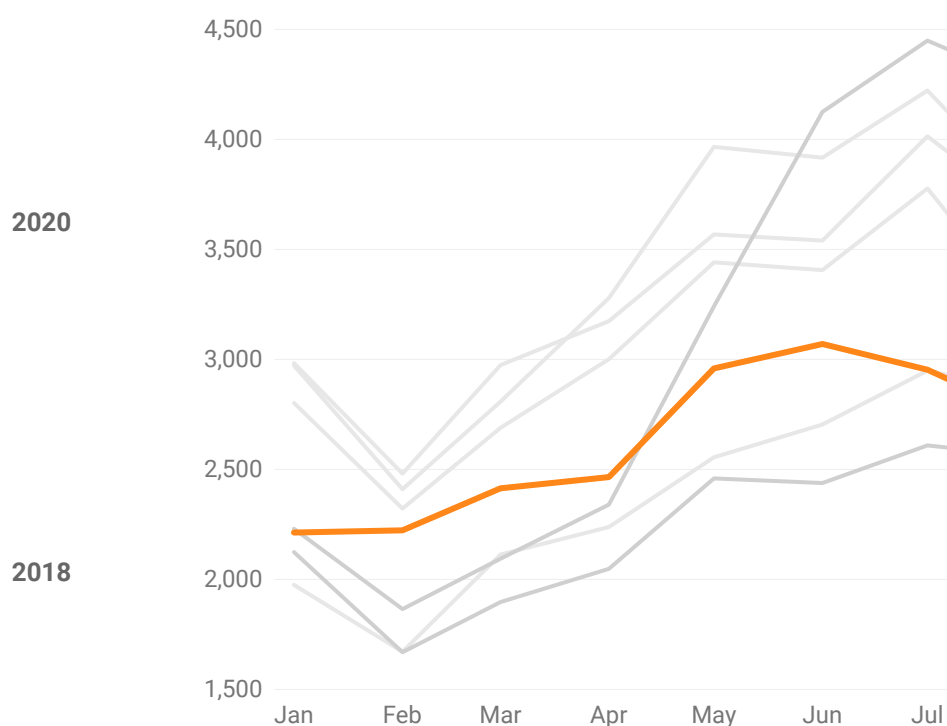
One study showed that in Chicago, between 2019 and 2023, 38 percent of the total shooting incidents each year occurred during the summer months.<sup>14</sup> According to the same study, July alone accounted for 12 percent of all annual shooting incidents in the city.<sup>15</sup> However, this trend is not isolated to Chicago. Between 2016 and 2023, on average, July had the highest rate of gun violence victimizations in the 300 most populous U.S. cities compared with all other months. In 2023, for example, GVA recorded 3,777 gun violence victimizations in July, the most of any month and accounting for 10.8 percent of all victimizations that year. For comparison, in 2023, GVA recorded nearly 63 percent more gun violence victimizations in the 300 most populous U.S. cities in July than in February, which had the fewest recorded victimizations of any month at 2,322.

FIGURE 3



## 2024 recorded the smallest summer surge in gun violence since 2018

Total gun violence victimizations each month in the 300 most populous U.S. cities, January–August, 2018–2024



Hover or click to see values.

Note: In the Center for American Progress' analysis of Gun Violence Archive data, gun violence victimizations are defined as all firearm-related deaths and injuries.

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Gun Violence Archive, "Home," available at <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/> (last accessed September 10, 2024).

Chart: Center for American Progress

Unfortunately, the summer of 2024 did not break the pattern of gun violence increasing over the summer months. Gun violence victimizations did go up in 2024 between May and August compared with the first four months of the year. However, according to data from the GVA, the summer months of 2024 had fewer additional gun violence victimizations than the summer months of every year since 2018. Between May 2024 and August 2024, gun violence victimizations in the 300 most populous U.S. cities rose by only 25.7 percent compared with victimizations during the first four months of the year. Between 2018 and 2023, however, gun violence victimizations rose by 41.5 percent on average during these summer months, peaking in 2020, during which gun violence victimizations rose by 85 percent compared with the first four months of the year. Removing 2020, the average summer percentage increase between 2018 and 2023 is still 32.1 percent. Notably, however, overall YTD gun violence victimization levels are still up 10.4 percent compared with 2019 in the 300 most populous U.S. cities.



## The summer months of 2024 had fewer additional gun violence victimizations than the summer months of every year since 2018.

While the rate of gun violence victimizations and homicides did go up during the warmer months in 2024, overall, victimization rates in major U.S. cities are down compared with 2023. Based on analysis of data from the GVA, through the first eight months of 2024, YTD gun violence homicides are down 14.7 percent in the 300 most populous U.S. cities compared with 2023.

These findings add to the chorus of reports showing most American communities are becoming safer in the wake of the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; and also because of greater federal, state, and local investments being made in violence prevention strategies<sup>16</sup> and new gun laws and accountability measures implemented under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.<sup>17</sup>

## Success stories

More than 60 percent of the 300 most populated U.S. cities are experiencing fewer gun violence victimizations YTD compared with 2023, and more than 40 percent of cities are experiencing even lower rates of gun violence victimizations than they did in 2019. Even so, a few U.S. cities are showing considerable success in making their communities safer than they were five years ago. Of the 50 most populous U.S. cities, 12—El Paso, Texas; Bakersfield, California; Virginia Beach, Virginia; Baltimore, Maryland; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Fresno, California; San Diego, California; Boston, Massachusetts; San Jose, California; Miami, Florida; Jacksonville, Florida; and Omaha, Nebraska—have at least 20 percent fewer gun violence victimizations in 2024 than they had in 2019 at the same point in the year.

## 12 of the 50 most populous U.S. cities have 20 percent fewer gun violence victimizations year to date (YTD) than before pandemic

Difference in YTD total gun violence victimizations among cities with fewer victimizations than 2019, 50 most populous U.S. cities, January 1–August 31, 2023–2024

		2019	2024
El Paso, Texas	–51.3%	76	<b>37</b>
Virginia Beach, Virginia	–46.9%	49	<b>26</b>
Baltimore, Maryland	–43.7%	772	<b>435</b>
Bakersfield, California	–42.3%	71	<b>41</b>
Tulsa, Oklahoma	–40.2%	132	<b>79</b>
Fresno, California	–37.6%	117	<b>73</b>
San Jose, California	–33.3%	36	<b>24</b>
Boston, Massachusetts	–32.4%	136	<b>92</b>
San Diego, California	–31.7%	63	<b>43</b>
Miami, Florida	–28.4%	176	<b>126</b>
Jacksonville, Florida	–25....	243	<b>182</b>
Omaha, Nebraska	–21...	85	<b>67</b>

*Note: In the Center for American Progress' analysis of Gun Violence Archive data, gun violence victimizations are defined as all firearm-related deaths and injuries.*



Source: Author's calculations based on data from Gun Violence Archive, "Home," available at <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/> (last accessed September 10, 2024).

Table: Center for American Progress

## **Bakersfield, California's Gun Violence Reduction Strategy is making residents safer**

According to data from the Bakersfield Police Department (BPD) and the California Partnership for Safe Communities, homicides in the city of Bakersfield had been rising steadily even before the pandemic.<sup>18</sup> From 2014 to 2019, homicides recorded by BPD doubled from 17 to 34.<sup>19</sup> Then in 2020, like many major U.S. cities, Bakersfield saw a significant increase in homicides following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2019 to 2021, homicides almost doubled, jumping 36 percent from 2020 to 2021 alone.<sup>20</sup>

Just three years later, the picture in Bakersfield has completely changed; gun homicides have gone down in Bakersfield every year since 2022. Based on data from the GVA, through August 2024, not only have gun victimizations gone down 38.8 percent YTD compared with 2023, but even compared with 2019 levels, gun violence victimizations are down 42.3 percent YTD. As this evidence suggests, Bakersfield has become a national success story and model for other cities: It's not only curbing the rise in gun violence during the pandemic but is actually making the community safer than it was before 2020.

To address Bakersfield's rising violence, the city initiated its Gun Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) in 2020.<sup>21</sup> The strategy, made possible by funding from the California Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program, adapts concepts from evidence-based solutions in other communities, such as group violence reduction strategies and greater investments in community violence intervention work,<sup>22</sup> to fit the specific needs of Bakersfield.

In the fall of 2020, the city took additional steps to improve public safety: It hired full-time employees under the city manager to oversee the strategy's implementation.<sup>23</sup> According to Juan Avila,<sup>24</sup> chief operating officer at Garden Pathways, an organization that mentors youth and young adults through life-building services in Bakersfield, this was the first time the city had a central office "championing" violence intervention work and coordinating efforts across hospitals and trauma recovery centers, law enforcement, and community-based organizations carrying out intervention work.<sup>25</sup> According to the GVRS, coordination under the city manager's office ensured all stakeholders had pertinent, timely information to prevent violence before it happened or to mitigate future harms after it did. Employees working to implement the GVRS regularly shared gun violence trends, conducted a problem analysis of more than 200 homicide incidents, and held weekly review meetings to identify individuals at imminent risk of being involved with violence-enabled partners to maximize their efforts and to do direct intervention work. Finally, the GVRS emphasized building the capacity of its partners, in particular the community-based organizations performing the majority of the outreach to affected individuals.<sup>26</sup>

After the GVRS was fully launched in January 2022, homicides in Bakersfield dropped by 37 percent and gun violence incidents dropped by 31 percent.<sup>27</sup> An analysis conducted by the California Partnership for Safe Communities showed this was the most significant drop in homicides compared with four peer cities: Tucson, Arizona; Waco, Texas; Fresno, California; and Stockton, California.<sup>28</sup> The success of Bakersfield's GVRS is unmistakable and other major U.S. cities,

regardless of size, can learn lessons from how Bakersfield implemented its strategy to reduce homicides and gun violence.

## Outliers

Although most major U.S. cities are experiencing steep declines in gun violence, a few outliers are not seeing the same improvements to their public safety. Three cities—Charlotte, North Carolina; Long Beach, California; and Tampa, Florida—all still have gun violence victimization rates above pre-pandemic levels and are experiencing a double-digit percentage increase in gun violence so far in 2024 compared with 2023.

Through the first eight months of this year, Charlotte, North Carolina, for example, has experienced 66 percent more gun violence victimizations in 2024 than in 2023 and 40.3 percent more gun violence victimizations this year compared with 2019. While many factors contribute to changes in local gun violence rates and there is likely no policy that would singularly account for Charlotte being an outlier compared with other major cities, it is notable that its significant increase in gun violence victimizations coincides with North Carolina repealing its permit-to-purchase (PTP) law in 2023, overriding Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of the bill.<sup>29</sup>

Before being repealed, North Carolina's PTP law required anyone buying a handgun in the state to first obtain a permit from their local sheriff's office. The sheriff's office would then perform a background check on the individual and evaluate whether the permit seeker posed a threat to themselves or others before awarding a permit.<sup>30</sup>

All gun sellers with a federal firearms license must perform a background check on potential buyers through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, but still-exploitable loopholes can mean that individuals who intend harm might slip through the cracks.<sup>31</sup> As the research shows, state PTP laws, therefore, are an important additional protection to preventing gun violence.<sup>32</sup> A study of Connecticut's 1995 PTP law estimated the law was associated with a 40 percent reduction in gun homicides during the first 10 years of implementation.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, repealing state PTP laws has been linked to an estimated 25 percent increase in Missouri's firearm homicide rate.<sup>34</sup> According to Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of Bureau of Justice Statistics data, before North Carolina's permit-to-purchase law was repealed, it annually prevented "nearly 2,000 illegal sales to convicted felons and nearly 500 illegal sales to domestic abusers."<sup>35</sup> Instead of implementing additional solutions to reduce harm from firearms and gun violence, North Carolina legislators removed one of their strongest protections—leaving city officials and law enforcement agents with fewer tools to hold bad actors accountable and to prevent gun violence before it occurs.

Despite this, city and county leaders are working diligently to address gun violence in Charlotte with the tools they do have available, utilizing a public health approach to ending community violence. Mecklenburg County, which includes Charlotte, became the first county in the state to open an office of violence prevention in 2020.<sup>36</sup> The county's strategic plan, "The Way Forward," outlines a four-step approach to preventing community violence that emphasizes adopting strategies based on community input and feedback from more than 400 county community members and stakeholders.<sup>37</sup> As stated in the plan, the goal is to reduce homicides and gun-related assaults by 10 percent by 2028, bringing Charlotte in line with other major U.S. cities that are already experiencing similar reductions.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

All evidence is pointing to 2024 matching the historic progress the United States made in 2023 to make communities safer. Not only are crime trends going down overall, but this analysis also provides hope that the spikes in violent crime and gun violence are becoming less severe. Although the country has not returned to pre-pandemic levels of violence—nor should even those levels be the final goal—evidence that gun violence is broadly going down is meaningful as it should allow public safety officials and community stakeholders the headway to adopt more community-based prevention strategies to end community violence. Evidence-based strategies that take a public health approach to violence prevention have a proven track record of reducing gun violence and saving communities money,<sup>39</sup> which can be invested in other life-saving programs. However, these strategies take time, resources, and investment in their implementation to fully realize their potential. Through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022, historic levels of federal funding and state support<sup>40</sup> are already energizing this important work, but more sustainable funding, research, and collaboration is needed to ensure this work continues to make generations of families safer from gun violence.

## A note on the data

To study gun violence trends, the Center for American Progress analyzed 2016–2024 GVA data from January 1 through August 31 (also referred to as “year to date”). For this analysis, the author examined two primary metrics to measure gun violence levels: gun homicides and gun violence victimizations.

The GVA does not characterize gun violence incidents that result in death as either murders or homicides, as both terms carry specific legal definitions that can take months or years to determine through the criminal legal system. To analyze levels of interpersonal violence using GVA data, therefore, the author filtered incidents to exclude suicides and accidental shootings and to include only what can be interpreted as intentional homicides. For readability, the CAP analysis shortens “intentional homicides” to “gun homicides.”

Gun homicides are often used as the primary indicator of measuring violent crime trends because data on them are widely considered to be the most reliably collected data. While injuries from other violent crimes or gun violence can be inconsistently reported to authorities, homicides are almost always reported and, therefore, are more likely to be captured in the GVA dataset. However, homicide counts do not capture everything about the prevalence or frequency of gun violence incidents in a given community through different time periods. The type of weapon or ammunition used; the type of assault, including whether it was a targeted attack, domestic violence incident, or drive-by shooting; and the aim of the shooter can all play a role. Similarly, the distance one must travel to access a trauma center can mean the difference between an injury and a fatal shooting. For all these reasons, the author also analyzes gun violence victimizations, defined as all counts of firearm-related injuries and deaths, to provide a more complete picture of gun violence levels year to year.

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Appendix



**Gun violence victimizations are down in 187 of 300 most populous U.S. cities year to date (YTD)**

# YTD change in gun violence victimizations in 300 most populous U.S. cities, January 1–August 31, 2023–2024

Search by city

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	2023	2024	
Abilene, Texas	15	15	±0%
Akron, Ohio	86	89	+3.5%
Albuquerque, New Mexico	150	138	-8%
Alexandria, Virginia	30	14	-53.3%
Allen, Texas	20	0	-100%
Allentown, Pennsylvania	33	23	-30.3%
Amarillo, Texas	53	35	-34%
Anaheim, California	8	10	+25%
Anchorage, Alaska	32	39	+21.9%
Ann Arbor, Michigan	10	3	-70%
Antioch, California	36	21	-41.7%
Arlington, Texas	20	31	+55%
Arvada, Colorado	7	1	-85.7%
Athens, Georgia	27	16	-40.7%
Atlanta, Georgia	470	432	-8.1%
Augusta, Georgia	78	54	-30.8%
Aurora, Colorado	111	90	-18.9%
Aurora, Illinois	6	4	-33.3%
Austin, Texas	83	81	-2.4%
Bakersfield, California	67	41	-38.8%

*Note: In the Center for American Progress' analysis of Gun Violence Archive data, gun violence victimizations are defined as all firearm-related deaths and injuries.*

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Gun Violence Archive, "Home," available at <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/> (last accessed September 10, 2024).

Table: Center for American Progress

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## Endnotes

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Gun Violence Prevention

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