

CASE STUDY

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND



In 2019, the city of Baltimore, Maryland, joined the National Public Safety Partnership (PSP). PSP is a US Department of Justice (DOJ) program that helps cities address serious violent crime challenges by facilitating the development of data-driven, evidence-based strategies and supporting training and technical assistance (TTA) tailored to each city's needs. Baltimore participated in the PSP program through September 2023.

ABOUT BALTIMORE

Baltimore is Maryland's largest city and part of the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Baltimore is home to 585,693 residents spread across more than 220 neighborhoods. The city covers an area of 80.95 square miles. Baltimore is the most populated city in Maryland and is the only city in the state not located within a county. The demographic makeup of the city's residents is 61.6 percent Black, 29.2 percent White, 5.6 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 2.5 percent Asian. Of all Baltimore's residents, 20.3 percent live in poverty, with a median household income of \$54,124.¹



The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) serves the city of Baltimore and is the largest police department in Maryland, with nine districts plus a headquarters. As of June 1, 2023, the department had approximately 2,100 sworn personnel (2,605 budgeted) and 520 civilian employees (655 budgeted).²

In 2019, at the beginning of Baltimore's PSP engagement, the city had the third-highest violent crime rate in the United States, with 2,027.01 per 100,000 residents, 431.41 percent above the national five-year average.³ In 2016, the DOJ investigated the BPD and found that the agency engaged in a pattern and practice of unconstitutional policing.⁴ To address the findings of the pattern and practice investigation, BPD, the city, and DOJ entered into a consent decree. Since 2016, BPD has invested in new technology, revamped training, updated and created new policies, and built systems of accountability to ensure that the department operates constitutionally.

During the PSP engagement, violent crime in Baltimore decreased slightly overall. Most notably, as of August 10, 2023, toward the conclusion of its PSP engagement, the city had experienced 36 fewer homicides and 40 fewer nonfatal shootings compared with the same period in 2022.⁵

1 United States Census Bureau QuickFacts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/baltimorecitymaryland> (retrieved June 6, 2023).
2 Baltimore Police Department, 2022 Staffing Plan Update, August 2022, <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/2022%20Staffing%20Plan%20Update.pdf>.
3 Uniform Crime Report, <https://www.cde.ucr.cjic.gov>.
4 US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, Investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department, Aug. 10, 2016, <https://www.justice.gov/media/887696/dl?inline>.
5 As reported by Baltimore Police Department.

Table 1. Violent crime data (2017–2022)

| Year | Population | Violent Crime | Homicide | Rape | Robbery | Aggravated Assault |
|------|------------|---------------|----------|------|---------|--------------------|
| 2017 | 610,226 | 12,430 | 342 | 382 | 5,879 | 5,827 |
| 2018 | 602,443 | 11,099 | 308 | 361 | 5,066 | 5,364 |
| 2019 | 593,490 | 11,101 | 348 | 324 | 4,856 | 5,573 |
| 2020 | 584,573 | 9,403 | 335 | 324 | 3,418 | 5,326 |
| 2021 | 575,584 | 10,344 | 337 | 316 | 3232 | 5514 |
| 2022 | 569,931 | 10,624 | 333 | 243 | 3301 | 5369 |

Source: Baltimore Police Department, 2023.

LOCAL AND FEDERAL PARTNERS

BPD had two police commissioners during its PSP engagement and two Baltimore City state attorneys. The following local and federal PSP partners participated in the PSP.

- BPD
- Baltimore City State Attorney's Office (BCSAO)
- Baltimore City Sheriff's Office
- Baltimore Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE)
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- US Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland (USAO)
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- United States Marshals Service (USMS)
- Northeastern University

NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY PARTNERSHIP INFORMATION

The Baltimore PSP identified five focus areas for its engagement: crime analysis, criminal justice collaboration, community engagement, investigations, and technology. BPD and its partners received a variety of technical assistance support from PSP subject matter experts (SME) in these focus areas, and some of the most beneficial assistance is further described below.

Tailored Training Courses

In the early stages of PSP participation, BPD recognized the importance of enhancing its officers' fundamental investigative skills. To address this need, the PSP developed specific online training programs through the PSP Virtual Academy tailored to BPD's requirements. PSP launched two training courses in March 2021 covering crime gun identification procedures ("Law Enforcement Guide to Crime Guns") and responding to violent crime scenes ("Crime S.C.E.N.E. Excellence"). To participate in these courses, officers viewed the training material through a secure website at their convenience. Once an officer successfully completed a course, they received a certificate, and their achievement was recorded in their departmental training record. The PSP also provided online training specifically focused on leadership development for BPD, called "Leadership Strategies: Building Effective Leaders to Impact Violence Reduction." As of September 30, 2023, 2,513 BPD officers have taken the courses.

EXAMPLES OF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE BALTIMORE PSP SITE

Technical Assistance

- Crime Analysis and Analytical Assistance
- Grant Landscape
- Nonfatal Shooting
- Prosecution Assistance
- Technology
- Victim Services Assistance

Peer Exchanges

- ATF NIBIN National Correlation and Training Center
- Chicago Strategic Decision Support Center
- DEA El Paso Intelligence Center
- Fairfax County Police Department Public Information Office
- Group Violence Intervention
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin Shoot Review

Training

- Focused Deterrence
- Prosecutorial Data Transparency and the Use of Data Dashboards
- Victim Services
- Procedural Justice
- Group Violence Reduction
- Crime Gun Initial Recovery, Identification and Processing
- Crime Scene Procedures
- Cold Case Trainings

6 National Public Safety Partnership, <https://www.nationalpublicsafetypartnership.org/Academy>.

CRIME ANALYSIS AND INTELLIGENCE

In December 2019, BPD received a \$750,000 grant through the Local Law Enforcement Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) Integration Initiative. This grant enabled BPD to enhance its capabilities in tracing illegal firearms used in street crimes and foster greater collaboration in its efforts. The allocated funds were used to hire two additional investigators and provide training in analytics and data utilization. These measures aimed to establish connections between perpetrators and firearms involved in criminal incidents. Through PSP, BPD was also able to observe the Strategic Decision Support Centers and Area Technology Centers of the Chicago Police Department both in person and through virtual exchanges. These exchanges served as a valuable learning experience, influencing BPD's creation of Baltimore City Intelligence Centers (BCICs). Each BCIC is staffed with data analysts, police officers, assistant state's attorneys, and caseworkers. The centers' primary role is to facilitate intelligence-gathering and case management. Currently, three BCICs are operational, and there are plans to expand their presence to cover all nine BPD precincts.



GUN VIOLENCE

Under the direction of the Baltimore MONSE, Baltimore PSP partners, including researchers from Northeastern University, successfully piloted a Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) inspired by the evidence-based approach of focused deterrence. The Baltimore GVRS utilizes the intelligence-gathering capabilities of the BCICs and Baltimore's CGIC to identify individuals at high risk of violence. These individuals are then enrolled in an intervention program that offers a comprehensive range of social services.

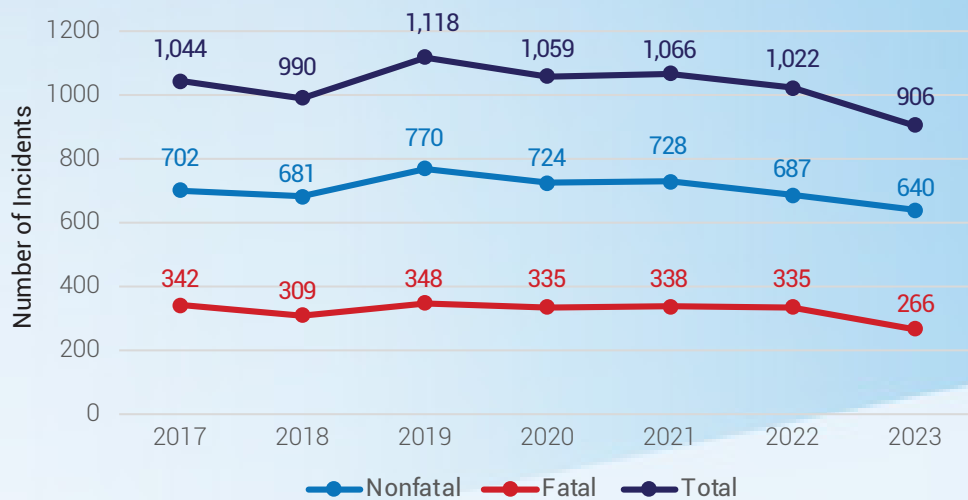
Throughout the PSP, the City of Baltimore accomplished the following:

- The mayor's office established MONSE to coordinate the GVRS initiative. MONSE is particularly focused on developing the community aspect of the GVRS, creating a network of social services and support for individuals seeking to break away from violence in Baltimore.
- BPD formed a dedicated Group Violence Investigation Unit within its criminal investigations division. This unit plays a crucial role in driving the law enforcement component of the GVRS.
- In fall 2021, BPD successfully started a GVRS pilot program in the Western District, which is the most violent district in the city. In 2022, the district experienced a notable 33 percent reduction in homicides and a 27 percent reduction in nonfatal shootings.
- The mayor's office announced that the Baltimore GVRS would expand to the Southwestern District in the first quarter of 2023. The Central District and Eastern District were scheduled to follow, with the ultimate goal of scaling the strategy citywide by mid-2024. Since its pilot launch in 2021, the Western District experienced a significant year-over-year decrease of 33.8 percent in both nonfatal shootings and homicides, making it the least violent district among historically violent districts in the city, which includes the Eastern, Southern, and Southwestern districts.

TTA PROVIDED IN SUPPORT OF THE GVRS:

- Virtual peer exchanges to educate both BPD and local PSP partners on the construction and implementation of an effective program.
 - A comprehensive analysis by Dr. Anthony Braga that serves as the foundation for Baltimore's GVRS initiative.
 - A comprehensive Victim Services review, including 21 observations to enhance services and protection for victims of violent crimes in Baltimore. By addressing these areas, the observations also aim to foster trust and overcome barriers that hinder cooperation from victim witnesses, ultimately contributing to the reduction of crime.

Chart 1: Baltimore's nonfatal and fatal shooting data (2017–2023)



Source: Baltimore Police Department, 2023.

FEDERAL PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

In late fall 2019, the USAO, District of Maryland, announced the establishment of a permanent task force in Baltimore with the mission of focusing on the city's most violent offenders. In spring 2020, this "strike force" was formed, comprising personnel such as federal agents and detectives from participating agencies such as ATF, BPD, DEA, FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, Maryland State Police, and USMS. These individuals were integrated into seven groups and operated from a newly established facility in southwest Baltimore. Since its inception, the strike force has collaborated with federal and state prosecutors to target organized crime, aiming to reduce homicides and drug overdoses in the city. Continuing their joint efforts, local, state, and federal law enforcement partners in Baltimore, including ATF, BCSAO, BPD, and USAO, are working together to specifically combat gun-related crimes. In July 2020, as part of the Maryland Exile Program, the USAO charged 16 felons in federal court with illegal possession of firearms in Baltimore.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COLLABORATION

In February 2020, PSP conducted a review of the Baltimore City State Attorney Office's Crime Strategy Unit (CSU). The review team noted that CSU's approach of integrating community liaisons who work closely with community partners is a unique feature of the CSU. These liaisons work directly with community partners to collect information on the needs and issues that are affecting neighborhoods. Through the combination of these efforts, the CSU can leverage intelligence information from a variety of both internal and external sources. However, the unit lacked systematic intelligence sharing. As a result, CSU and BPD implemented a monthly gun case review meeting to discuss new and ongoing cases and potential outcomes.

BPD also facilitated a meeting of the department's crime analysts, BCSAO, and federal partners to enhance data- and intelligence-sharing. In addition, related to the site's focus on building its crime analysis capacity, BCSAO and BPD renewed their commitment to intelligence-sharing and collaboration in the fight against violent crime. This commitment is exemplified by the physical placement of BCSAO prosecutors in three BPD districts under the BCIC concept.

Finally, several stakeholders are collaborating through the GVRs to reduce violent crime. Community partners are also involved in the implementation of the GVRs, including Baltimore Roca⁷ and Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. Baltimore's Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan recognizes the GVRs as a crucial element of the city's dual integrated violence prevention approaches. The approach fosters direct and sustained engagement with a small number of individuals who are involved in groups that are most likely to either fall victim to or perpetrate violence. This strategy entails collaboration

⁷ Roca is a nonprofit organization that focuses on youth who are involved in violence but are not yet ready for change. Roca works with youth to build relationships and teach life-saving skills to help young men aged 16 to 24 build safe lives.

between city government, community leaders, social service providers, employers, and law enforcement. When necessary, the GVRS ensures swift, certain, and legitimate accountability for violent behavior, imposing immediate consequences on those who continue to engage in violence.

“This is the power of implementing a strategy that doesn’t solely rely on law enforcement.

We are interrupting cycles of violence and proving that when people, their families, and communities are given support that’s responsive to their needs – including life coaching, behavioral health services, housing support, and case management – they will often make the choice to step away from the life,”

–MONSE Director Stefanie Mavronis.

As of December 6, 2022, the program had conducted 132 customized notification referrals. In these referrals, individuals in Baltimore identified as being at risk of either perpetrating or falling victim to gun violence were contacted by MONSE staff members, law enforcement, and community members. The purpose was to offer them a range of services, including life coaching, housing assistance, employment support, emergency relocation, and cognitive behavioral therapy. Out of these referrals, 71 individuals have accepted the offered services.

KEY LESSONS FOR SUCCESS

TTA that closely aligns with department priorities. BPD’s improvements in crime analysis, gun violence investigations, and violence reduction were built on the training and peer learning (on Chicago’s SDSC and Milwaukee’s Shoot Reviews) offered by PSP.

Expansion of successful efforts. The GVRS has been a key component of the BPD’s overall crime strategy. Its initial implementation was fast and effective, which caused pressure to expand it to other districts quickly. Care must be taken, however, that rapid expansion doesn’t dilute the program’s effectiveness, because the strength of community partnerships is uneven across districts and can take time to develop.

Peer learning. Baltimore has navigated an extraordinary array of challenges and achieved some impressive violence reduction and organizational improvement. Given the successes achieved, it should be considered as a site to be visited by new PSP sites facing similar challenges.