

Harris County ARPA Project Summary

Title of project: Gun Buyback Events

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Working group: Health

Focus area/topic:

Gun Violence Reduction and Prevention

Relevant dept./org: HC Public Health; Sheriff's Office

Existing program:

☐ Y ☒ N

Please describe the project idea:

Voluntary gun buyback programs allow gun owners to surrender personal firearms, usually to governmental law enforcement entities, in exchange for cash, a voucher, gift card, tickets to a professional sporting event, or a similar thing of value. Program goals are to take unwanted firearms out of the community, thus reducing the potential for them to cycle through illegal networks or end up as potential hazards in the home. The idea behind gun buyback efforts is that gun violence can be lowered by reducing the number of guns in civilian hands.¹ In recent months, Harris County and similar sized counties across the nation have experienced an uptick in gun related violence and deaths.

Proposed budget range:

The total requested budget is \$1,096,000. A program budget of \$1.1. million covers an estimated eight events total, possibly with more or fewer depending on the actual costs of each event.

A budget of \$137,000 per event could cover the following eligible costs: gift cards in exchange for surrendered weapons; personnel from the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) to provide security and collect weapons at the event; personnel from HCSO to submit all weapons be checked for reports of lost and stolen and submit all firearms to the HCSO property room and Medical Examiner's Office/Lab for test firing and entry into the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN); materials and supplies; and communications and outreach efforts in advance of the event. The actual costs for each event will vary depending on the number and type of weapons collected; the proposed budget assumes approximately 500 firearms will be collected at each event.

The exact costs per event and the costs per line item may vary. Participating Precincts may choose to partner with other government entities located within Harris County and agree to share costs on an event-by-event basis. Costs spent on all gun buyback events, combined, shall not exceed the total program budget.

Item	Cost per Event (est.)	Cost for 8 Events (est.)
Gift Cards	\$77,000	\$616,000
Personnel	\$13,000	\$80,000
NIBIN Checks on All Weapons Collected	\$30,000	\$240,000
Materials & Supplies	\$3,000	--
Communications/Outreach	\$15,000	\$160,000
Total Cost	\$138,000	\$1,096,000

¹ Clark Merrefield, Gun Buybacks; What the Research Says, Harvard Kennedy School, Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, <https://journalistsresource.org/health/gun-buybacks-what-the-research-says/>, January 9, 2020, last accessed November 12, 2021.

Background / situation analysis:

Guns in the U.S. Prior to the Pandemic

In 2017, almost 40,000 people died from gunshot injuries in the United States, an average of nearly 109 people each day. Per capita, this is significantly higher than in other industrialized countries.² Harris County's rate of firearm fatalities is 13.3 deaths per 100,000 people, a rate that steadily increased from 2000 to 2017.³ This is slightly higher than the already-high national and state averages (11.9 and 12.7, respectively). In Texas, Black and white people die from firearm-related injuries at a higher rate than the overall population (per 100,000 people, 19.1 Black gun-related deaths, 15.3 White deaths, and 12.6 overall).⁴

According to a research project from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, the U.S. accounts for nearly 46% of all civilian-held firearms in the world. There are about 121 firearms for every 100 U.S. civilians. Canada's rate is roughly 35 while Mexico is at approximately 13 per 100 civilians. Gun ownership in the U.S. is also concentrated, with 3% of Americans owning half of all guns in the country, according to a 2015 survey from researchers at Harvard and Northeastern universities.⁵

Pandemic Impact on Gun Violence

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the occurrence of gun violence. In 2020, gun homicides and non-suicide related shootings took roughly 19,300 lives, a 25% increase from 2019.⁶

Conditions remain ripe for guns to fall into the hands of those who use them to commit violent acts or are careless when it comes to storing them. Over 22 million guns were purchased in 2020, representing a 64% increase over 2019.⁷ Increased gun sales have strained systems put in place to facilitate background checks, at the same time that guns are being sold by unlicensed sellers and ghost guns are manufactured. Stolen guns are also more common: the Houston Police Department cited 2,604 reports of guns being stolen from vehicles in 2021, an increase compared from 2,368 stolen gun reports in 2020.

² Amnesty International, Gun Violence Key Facts, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/gun-violence/>, last accessed March 8, 2022.

³ Public Safety in Houston, Despite some progress, violent crime and gun-related deaths are on the rise in our communities, Growing gun-related deaths are a cause for concern, [Understanding Houston](#), last accessed February 16, 2022.

⁴ KFF, "Deaths Due to Firearms per 100,000 Population by Race/Ethnicity," (2019) <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/firearms-death-rate-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&selectedRows=%7B%22states%22:%7B%22texas%22:%7B%7D%7D,%22w rapups%22:%7B%22united-states%22:%7B%7D%7D%7D&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>, last accessed March 27, 2022.

⁵ Clark Merrefield, Gun Buybacks; What the Research Says, Harvard Kennedy School, Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, <https://journalistsresource.org/health/gun-buybacks-what-the-research-says/>, January 9, 2020, last accessed November 12, 2021.

⁶ Gun Violence Archive, accessed February 3, 2022, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>; Centers for Disease Control.

⁷ Federal Bureau of Investigation, NICS Firearm Checks: Month/Year by State and Type, <https://bit.ly/2MlIXs6>, last accessed February 3, 2022.

Houston is above the state and national rates for each of the four types of violent offenses that comprise violent crime – murder, rape, robbery, and assault

The pandemic exacerbated factors generally associated with domestic violence, including increased male unemployment, stresses associated with childcare and homeschooling, increased financial insecurity, and increased use of alcohol and other substances

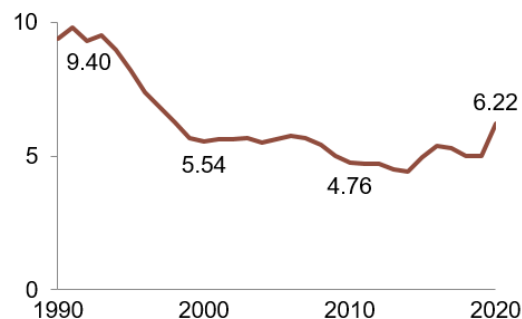
The Houston Police Department reported a 35% increase in homicides in 2021 vs. the same period in 2020 (through June 10)

Gun violence isn't just about homicides. Firearm suicide attempts are especially lethal: they result in death 85% of the time, while the rate of success when attempting suicide by drug (overdose) is only 3%. Research suggests the pandemic has had adverse effects on Americans' mental health. Isolation, fear, economic uncertainty, elevated stress, and increased alcohol use raise risk for suicide.⁸ This risk may be particularly elevated in individuals with pre-existing psychiatric conditions, those who reside in areas hard hit by COVID-19, those who have a family member or a friend who has died of COVID-19, and frontline healthcare workers. When a person with suicidal thoughts has access to firearms—the most lethal means of suicide—risk is further increased.⁹

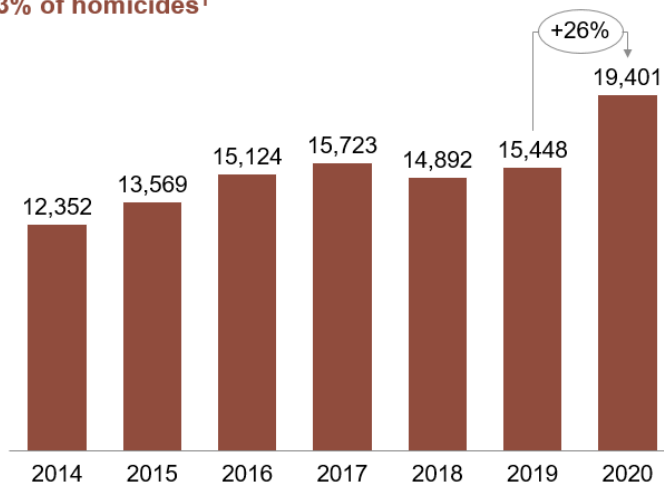
Violent crimes increased across the United States in 2020

The US murder rate increased by ~25% in 2020, reaching the highest level since 1998...

Murders per 100,000 people



...driven by an increase in gun deaths, which represent 73% of homicides¹



¹ Gun-related killings represented 73% of all US homicides in 2019; data excludes gun-related suicides
Source: [The New York Times](#), [Gun Violence Archive](#), [BBC](#)

Maximizing Effectiveness of Buyback Programs Locally

Gun buybacks used in conjunction with other violence prevention programs have been shown to be successful in reducing the number of firearms that could lead to injury or death. Research also shows that gun buyback programs can influence public perception of how local authorities are dealing with gun violence and may serve as opportunities to educate communities about gun violence strategies.¹⁰

⁸ The Bulletpoints Project, COVID-19 and Firearm Injury and Death, [COVID-19 and Firearm Injury and Death - BulletPoints Project](#), May 25, 2021, Last accessed February 3, 2022.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Clark Merrefield, The Journalist's Resource, Informing the News, Criminal Justice, Health, Politics & Government, Gun Buybacks: What the Research Says, [Gun buyback programs: Here's what the research says \(journalistsresource.org\)](#), January 9, 2020, last accessed, March 8, 2022.

Program Operators & Elements

The Harris County Sheriff's Office or Harris County Public Health will administer program funds provided by Harris County, and the HCSO will manage all aspects of the event that directly concern weapons (collection, checks, submission to lab). Public Health will further provide education materials on the effects of gun violence to include suicide prevention information, while the Sheriff's Office will coordinate and advertise the gun buyback events in coordination with respective Precinct staffs.

Key to the success of any planned gun buyback event in the County is advertising to the public the opportunity to participate in the event and its benefits, targeting communities most affected by sustained or elevated gun violence acts, and targeting the buyback of firearms most used to commit these acts. All gun buyback events conducted in the County will follow best practices for these type events that include but are not limited to:

- Structuring compensation to attract the right guns. The ideal schedule should a) incentivize collection of the most dangerous guns (e.g. a graded system with larger rewards for handguns and assault weapons, and b) avoid incentivizing participation by gun collectors or creating arbitrage opportunities. The proposed program would provide a different amount in gift cards for different types of weapons. A \$50 gift card will be exchanged for a non-functioning firearm, a \$100 gift card for rifles or shotguns, a \$150 gift card for a handgun, and a \$200 gift card for an assault rifle. The gift cards will be for use at grocery stores, Walmart, Target, or other retailers.
- Individuals possessing ghost guns will be excluded from participating in this program.
- Advertising focused on at-risk populations, including youth, parents, and gun owners who self-identify as being concerned about safety. Partnership with community organizations and institutions to promote the event can improve the participation and impact.
- All guns collected should be destroyed. Allowing collected guns to re-enter circulation undermines objectives of community organizers, and the educational campaigns designed to encourage participation. Under the proposed project, the HCSO would destroy all weapons after they are processed at the crime lab.
- Participation in this event is open to Harris County residents only. Participants in this event will be required to present a valid form of photo ID.
- Buybacks should be held in neutral locations, such as community centers and houses of worship, rather than at police stations. Each precinct could work with the HCSO to identify a location that is safe and accessible to the target participants.
- Community participation in the initiation, implementation, and funding of gun buybacks can improve the secondary impacts of the event. Following these science-based practices for effectiveness, gun buybacks can be a powerful addition to any comprehensive, multi-pronged approach addressing gun violence.

Expected impact:

The impact of gun buyback events in various jurisdictions depend on a number of factors and results vary widely. Jurisdictions hosting similar events have collected between 560 to almost 800 firearms. A budget of \$90,000 per event would provide gift cards for approximately 500 participants per event.

In January 2022, the **Winston-Salem** (North Carolina) Police Department purchased 516 guns from citizens during the Winston-Salem gun buyback event held Saturday, Jan. 15, 2022. The event was part of city-wide efforts to reduce gun violence in the community. The department accepted unloaded firearms – with no questions asked – in exchange for cash on site. The City of Winston-Salem allocated \$99,000 of Coronavirus Local Fiscal Relief Fund money to compensate citizens for firearms. The gun buyback resulted in the collection of 329 handguns, 177 long guns and 10 semi-automatic rifles. Two of

the guns collected had been reported stolen. Those guns were stored as evidence and efforts will be made to return the firearms to their owners.

Monmouth County, New Jersey was one of nine counties statewide to host separate gun buybacks across the state on Saturday, October 23, 2021. As a result, a total of 360 firearms were collected at the Second Baptist Church of Asbury Park, including 159 handguns, 133 rifles and shotguns, and three assault weapons. Prompted by the healthy demand, a second event was held the following Saturday at the Bethel AME Church in Freehold; as a result, a total of 234 more firearms, including 144 handguns, 67 rifles and shotguns, and two assault weapons were collected. Between the two events, more than \$66,000 was paid out to participating citizens turning in 594 unwanted weapons

In 2016, there were 791 firearms collected at the **City of Los Angeles's** annual Gun Buyback event. A total of 364 handguns, 237 rifles, 144 shotguns and 42 assault weapons were bought back at two locations, with four guns categorized as "other," according to local authorities. The number of firearms turned in was so high, they ran out of gift cards, but many still turned in guns without receiving gift cards. The event ended one hour early. People who turned in unwanted guns were not questioned, but the weapons are run through a system to see who they were registered to and to determine if they were lost or stolen. Of the 791 guns 12 were stolen or lost and an attempt was made to return them their owners, who were also be given the option to surrender them. All firearms collected during the event were thereafter destroyed.

Desoto, Texas (2021), The Gun Surrender Program is an initiative hosted by the DeSoto Police Department and supported by the City of DeSoto, Community Missionary Baptist Church and the Dallas County District Attorney's Office. DeSoto PD stated at the time, 'This a 'no questions asked' surrender of unwanted firearms to law enforcement for destruction.' The event took place on July 31 (2021) from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and those who participated were eligible to receive a \$100 gift card. Over 250 firearms were handed over during the city of DeSoto's gun surrender program during the event.

Houston, Texas, July 30, 2022. A successful gun buyback event was conducted by the City of Houston in coordination with Harris County Precinct One at WHEELER AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH.

Event Announcement Excerpt:

Mayor Sylvester Turner, City of Houston in Partnership with Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Harris County Precinct One announces Gun Buyback.

In partnership with the Houston Police Department, officers will conduct a Gun Buy Back Operation in the parking lot of Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church. Depending on the type of weapon, citizens turning in firearms will be rewarded with a gift card in the amounts from \$50.00 to \$200.00. All firearms will be retrieved with a no-question-asked policy by law enforcement. Funding for this program was provided by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Date: Saturday, July 30, 2022

Time: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Noon)

Location: Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, 3826 Wheeler Ave, Houston, TX 77004

Gift card funding:

\$50.00: Non-functioning firearm

\$100.00: Rifle or Shotgun

\$150.00: Handgun

\$200.00: Fully Automatic rifle

Upon Arrival please stay in your vehicle at all times. All firearms must be stored inside the trunk of your vehicle. We will not facilitate in providing a gift card for those who do not follow directions.

The above gun buyback program, part of the city's federally funded One Safe Houston initiative, was lauded as a success that exceeded organizers' expectations in terms of turnout. A spokesperson for the Mayor stated that 845 guns were collected, with nearly \$100,000 in gift cards distributed in exchange. With the event spanning several hours longer than planned because of the turnout, 150 people were turned away and given priority spots in line for a future gun buyback event, according to the mayor's office.

The Houston Police Department is currently checking the guns to see if any of them were stolen or used in a crime, in which event they will be returned to their owner or processed as evidence, according to the mayor's office. The weapons will otherwise be destroyed.

Citing the recent gun buyback event for which Harris County Precinct One participated and the current economic conditions involving inflation rates as well as the recent uptick in violent crimes involving guns, we believe it is highly likely that countywide buyback events will be successful at this time as well. The County should take advantage of these conditions to promote this program in the wake of the increase in gun violence countywide. This program in coordination with other county violent crime reduction programs currently ongoing may help to raise awareness of criminal activity and violence involving guns as well as educate county residents on how they can keep themselves and family members safe from such acts.

A series of after action review meetings have been conducted between the City of Houston and Precinct One concerning the success of the event at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church. Best practices from that event will also be incorporated into plans for countywide events to promote the success of future events as well. Some changes to be made for future buyback events include the exclusion of ghost guns being accepted as well as better traffic management to limit disruption to area commuters.

Potential timeframe:

The project would include funding for two sets of buyback events for any precinct that chooses to participate. The precincts could coordinate to host events on the same day, or to stagger the events. Most jurisdictions hold gun buyback events on weekend days.

Relevant materials:

[Gun buyback programs: Here's what the research says \(journalistsresource.org\)](https://journalistsresource.org/gun-buyback-programs-research-and-recommendations/)

Gun Buyback Programs, Research and Recommendations, HC Sheriff's Office, October 2021 (attached)

How does this project align with the goals and strategies of the Equity Framework?¹¹

Include initial responses to Equity Reflections (Appendix A, below) if not covered above.

Equity Goals

Advancing equity means striving for the same outcomes and opportunities across different groups, not simply delivering the same treatment when it fails to yield fair, just, and equal results. With this Equity

¹¹ See following pages for full Harris County Equity Framework

Framework, Harris County will ensure an equity lens is applied to investments made possible by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA).

In determining how to deploy ARPA funds, Harris County will pursue investments that advance the following equity goals:

Reversing negative pandemic-related trends and closing gaps in health, economic, and housing outcomes; positioning disproportionately impacted groups and neighborhoods for improved future outcomes.

Building capacity within County government, creating a shared understanding of and commitment to equity, and developing tools and practices to support equity-centered solutions.

Measuring racial and ethnic disparities in health, economic, social, and environmental outcomes so that pandemic recovery plays a role in the long-term remediation of systemic harms to populations of color.

Incorporating an equity assessment in each project, with opportunities to reflect and adapt based on interim results and community input throughout the project.

Monitoring investment across the entire program to ensure the overall portfolio is reaching populations and neighborhoods most impacted by the pandemic.

Equity Strategies

To ensure Harris County addresses existing and exacerbated inequities, we will employ the following strategies when developing, selecting, and delivering ARPA programs.³

Disaggregate historical data and outcome measures by race, ethnicity, gender, and/or geography and other demographic variables to identify inequities and ensure programs are prioritizing disproportionately impacted groups.

Analyze specific factors underlying inequities such as racial and gender discrimination, disparate policy impacts, and institutional and structural barriers, adjusting program design accordingly.

Include community representatives of groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic throughout program development, delivery and evaluation.

Target resources and strategies to minimize incremental burdens on groups most affected by the pandemic while maximizing their access to relief.

Evaluate the performance of projects through defined metrics and provide opportunities for reflection, creating space for continual improvement throughout implementation.

Publish transparent program results via a publicly available website and other outlets, ensuring performance information reaches disproportionately impacted groups.

Equity Approach

An equity-oriented approach will be embedded throughout the lifecycle of each ARPA-funded project and across the full ARPA program as follows:

- 1. Capacity Building:** The Budget Management Department will identify resources to provide training and technical assistance on equity-centered program development to support ARPA Working Groups, relevant Department staff, and project administrators.
- 2. Project Development:** All project proposals should incorporate responses to the Equity Reflections (Appendix A) or other materials describing implementation of the Equity Strategies listed above.
- 3. Project Selection:** An Equity Assessment tool (Appendix B) will be used to inform project selection. The tool includes questions assessing each project's application of the Equity Strategies. It must be completed by the Working Group Lead, approved by voting members of the associated Working Group, and included in the project's submission to the Steering Committee.

4. Project Monitoring & Evaluation: At an interim checkpoint and at the end of each project, qualitative and quantitative responses to the Equity Reflections (Appendix A) will be refreshed to ensure consistency with the original project intent and identify opportunities for improvement.

5. Program Evaluation & Accountability: Program-wide financial analyses will be conducted by the Budget Management Department to determine ARPA funding impact on targeted populations and geographies where feasible. Reporting on investment relative to social vulnerability, reporting on investment by race, ethnicity, gender, and/or other specific populations where available, and/or other program-level equity analyses will be provided to Commissioners Court on a quarterly basis beginning in Q4 2021 and also made available online.

APPENDIX A: Equity Reflections

For each project, the following questions addressing the Equity Strategies may be adapted for use in the initial project proposal, at interim checkpoints, and in a final look-back. Team members responsible for proposing and implementing a project should reflect on the project's impact on equity via overall project results and associated community engagement.

1. How does your project leverage clear outcome measures and disaggregated data from beginning to end to identify inequity and ensure programs are prioritizing disproportionately impacted groups? Who has been disproportionately impacted?

Anyone can be affected by firearm violence but in certain situations gun violence disproportionately impacts communities of color, women and other marginalized groups in society. Sometimes, the mere presence of firearms can make people feel threatened and fear for their lives with severe and long-term psychological effects on individuals and their communities. When people are afraid of gun violence, this can also have a negative impact on people's right to education or health care when they are too afraid to attend schools or visit health facilities, or if these services are not fully functioning due to firearm violence in their community.

The increase in violent crime has been caused by a wide range of factors, and several groups will play a role in addressing violence prevention

Several factors caused a spike in violent crimes in 2020...



A variety of trauma experiences (fear, depression, anxiety, suicide ideation, domestic violence, abuse situations, divorce, custody battles, economic hardships) are all up due to COVID-19. (*Shield Bearer*)



A key aspect of crime prevention is employment – research shows that 50% of unemployed population has a criminal record. (*Rand Corporation*)



Domestic violence increasing and people don't have a space to escape from stressor of home with working from home. (*Avenue 360 Houston Area Community Service*)

Source: Stakeholder interviews

... and multiple groups in Harris County may provide support to the violence prevention effort

Countywide Gun Buyback Program



Public Health and Harris County Sheriff's Office to collaborate on **law enforcement-led initiatives**



Health Working Group to evaluate **community partnerships** focused on community well-being & **substance use treatment** as part of Behavioral Health focus area



Jobs & Education Working Group to evaluate economic opportunities, including workforce development



County Operations Working Group to evaluate potential law enforcement resourcing initiatives

Wide access to firearms and loose regulations lead to more than 39,000 men, women and children being killed each year in the U.S.

Firearm homicide in this nation disproportionately impacts African American communities, particularly young black men. 14,542 people in the USA lost their lives in gun homicides in 2017. African Americans accounted for 58.5% of these nationwide, despite making up just 13% of the US population. Moreover, firearm homicide was the leading cause of death for black men and boys aged 15-34 in 2017, and they were more than 10 times more likely to die from firearm homicide than white men and boys of the same age group.

Women facing domestic violence and children are also disproportionately affected.

In 2017, the number of children who died from firearm-related deaths in the USA rose to 1,814 from 1,637 in 2016

Between 2% and 7% of all injuries treated at US pediatric trauma centers are gun-related. Most children who are victims of firearm killings in the USA are from minority communities. Homicide is the second leading cause of death among black children and 65% of those killings are committed with guns.

Texas Firearm Deaths

There were [more than 4,000](#) gun-related deaths in Texas in 2020.

In 2019, 61% of all Texas [suicides](#) were by firearm.

In 2019, nearly 73% of veteran suicides in Texas were by firearm according to the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#).

In 2020, 183 [women in Texas](#) were killed by a male intimate partner—67% of those murders were by firearm.

Women in Texas are [24%](#) more likely to be murdered with a gun than women in other states.

In [2019](#), at least 32 Texan children ages 0-17 died in unintentional shootings.

Domestic violence increased during the pandemic nationally...



Increase in domestic violence incidents in the United States following stay-at-home orders



Increase in domestic violence-related shootings in the United States in 2020

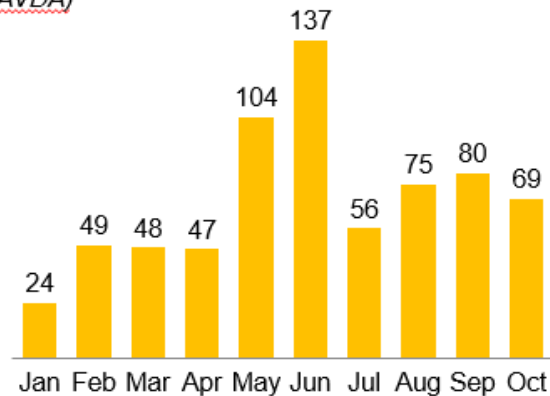
The pandemic likely exacerbated factors that are generally associated with domestic violence:

- Increased male unemployment
- Stresses associated with childcare and homeschooling
- Increased financial insecurity
- Increased use of alcohol and other substances

The pandemic also confined parents and children to their homes and cut off potential victims from those who might have reported signs of abuse or intervened

... and in Harris County

2020 monthly requests for protective orders filed by the Harris County Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA)



From April-October, the Houston Area Women's Center reported a 33% increase in domestic violence calls compared to the same period in 2019

Source: [National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice](#), [PBS](#), [ABC13](#), [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services](#)

As for the County's youth, according to the Houston Chronicle, through May of this year, 19 young people — 15 of them Hispanic or Black — have died in Harris County as a result of various forms of gun violence, excluding suicides, according to statistics from the Institute of Forensic Sciences. They all died before the age of 18. Nineteen children also died at Robb Elementary in Uvalde in May, a number that shocked the country. Most children who die in shootings, however, are not killed in mass casualty incidents.

The ages of individuals affected by gun violence in this city and across the nation are getting younger and younger. Harris County is on track to surpass the count from last year, when 37 young people were shot to death in homicides and accidental shootings — up from 29 victims in 2020, 30 in 2019 and 27 the year before. The County has lost 142 children to gun violence since the beginning of 2018, according to the medical examiner data. Members of affected communities have appealed to elected leaders on all levels to make changes through legislation to make it harder for people to obtain and possess firearms including through banning certain types of weapons, raising the age to possess or own a firearm, and imposing longer waiting periods to obtain a firearm among other proposed changes.

Cost

Gun violence in Texas [costs](#) \$16.6 billion per year.¹²

¹² Texas Gun Sense Fast Facts, [Texas Gun Violence Facts - Texas Gun Sense \(txgunsense.org\)](#), last accessed August 9, 2022.

In 2021, the most murders across the county were committed in the following zip codes (Handguns were found to be the most common weapon used for homicides nationwide (45.7%)):

77033--The Southpark neighborhood in southeast Houston had 11 murders.

Population for Zip Code 77033: 28,845 Persons

Population by Race

Black	18,980	65.80%
Other Race	4,266	14.79%
White	4,746	16.45%

Population by Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	9,359	32.45%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	19,486	67.55%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77033: 1,635 Families (23.98% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77033: 13.35%

77022--There have also been 11 murders north of Loop 610 to Tidwell, between the Hardy Toll Road and Independence Heights.

Population for Zip Code 77022: 31,306 Persons

Population By Race

Black	5,684	18.16%
Other Race	9,120	29.13%
White	14,930	47.69%

Population by Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	23,879	76.28%
Non-Hispanic Latino	7, 427	23.72%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77022: 2,087 Families (30.81% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77022: 6.27%

77036--The area that includes Sharpstown and Chinatown had 10 murders.

Population Zip Code 77036: 79,046 Persons

Population By Race

Asian	10,487	13.27%
Black	12,266	15.52%
Other Race	21,349	27.01%
White	29,179	36.91%

Population By Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	50,773	64.23%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	28,273	35.77%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77036: 5,235 Families (29.98% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77036: 5.94%

Other areas where a high number of murders were committed in the county include: 77021—9, 77029—8 (murders), 77076—9, 77088—8, 77091—7, 77092—8

77021

Population Zip Code 77021: 28,915 Persons

Population By Race

Black	20,326	70.30%
White	4,057	14.03%
Other Race	3,038	10.51%

Population By Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	5,748	19.88%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	23,167	80.12%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77021: 1,569 Families (23.50% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77021: 9.59%

77029

Population Zip Code 77029: 18,267 Persons

Population By Race

Black	4,042	22.18%
White	8,633	47.26%
Other Race	47, 33	25.91%

Population By Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	13,330	72.97%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	4,937	27.03%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77029: 1,108 Families (26.31% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77029: 9.18%

77076

Population Zip Code 77076: 36,268 Persons

Population By Race

Black	2,786	7.68%
White	19,966	55.05%
Other Race	11,744	32.38%

Population By Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	31,470	86.77%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	4,798	13.23%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77076: 2,212 Families (28.26% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77076: 2.61%

77088

Population Zip Code 77088: 55,138 Persons

Population By Race

Black	22,615	41.02%
White	17,930	32.52%
Other Race	10,764	19.52%

Population By Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	27,606	50.07%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	27,532	49.93%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77088: 2,507 Families (18.87% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77088: 7.56%

77091

Population Zip Code 77091: 27,307 Persons

Population By Race

Black	14,460	52.95%
White	7,361	26.96%
Other Race	4,284	15.69%

Population By Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	10,375	37.99%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	16,932	62.01%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77091: 1,610 Families (25.18% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77091: 5.10%

77092

Population Zip Code 77092: 35,973 Persons

Population By Race

Black	4,483	12.46%
White	21,482	59.72%
Other Race	8,140	22.63%

Population By Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino	18,248	50.73%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	17,724	49.27%

Families Below Poverty Zip Code 77092: 2,121 Families (25.33% of Families)

Population 16+ Unemployed Zip Code 77092: 5.98%

****Source Houston State of Health webpage**

It is proposed that the county's efforts to promote this program be focused in underserved communities and those most affected by gun violence across the county. Each event will take place within zip codes that have been identified as having the most fatalities due to gun violence. Crime data sets for the current year may also be used to determine new areas for consideration where it is determined that areas listed above currently have drops in numbers of homicides.

2. How have you analyzed specific factors underlying inequities? What did the analysis reveal?

Easy access to firearms, whether legal or illegal, is one of the main drivers of gun violence. Firearm violence by private actors has a strong socio-economic impact. It is typically concentrated in low-income urban neighborhoods with high levels of crime. Failure to address systemic discrimination, failure to keep firearms out of the hands of those most likely to misuse them, and a failure to invest in gun violence prevention programs all contribute to this crisis.¹³

Public mass shootings account for less than 1% of gun deaths in the U.S. (shooting incidents where 4 or more victims are killed). However, public mass shootings have a profound emotional and psychological effect on survivors, families and communities. The factors that contribute to a child resorting to gun violence are varied and often poorly understood. However, in the context of urban communities, youth violence can be associated with fear, need for protection, distrust of police due to entrenched discrimination and discriminatory policing, and desire for peer respect and approval, as well as involvement in criminal activities.

Effectively implemented gun regulation and violence prevention projects can stop the carnage. As a first step, states should recognize firearm violence as a threat to people's human rights, in particular their rights to life, to physical integrity and security of person, and to health.



Source: Urban Peace Institute

¹³ Amnesty International, Gun Violence Key Facts, [Gun Violence - Amnesty International](#), last accessed, August 9, 2022.

3. How does your project include voices from disproportionately impacted groups? How have community members been engaged in project development and / or evaluation?

The City of Houston, like all major cities in our nation, has experienced an increase in violent crime as the COVID-19 pandemic tightened its grip on the city, state and nation. Other factors contributing to the nationwide spike in violent crime include widespread social anxiety, economic uncertainty, mental health concerns, the increased presence of illegally owned firearms, and a strained court system plagued by criminal case backlogs that impact the pretrial, release, and prosecution of violent offenders.

At the local level, we are hamstrung by state legislation that allows for the unlimited proliferation of firearms across communities in the county. Therefore we are left with no choice but to implement policies and programs that have been proven to either reduce violent crimes committed using firearms or shape public perception of the local government's commitment to reducing gun violence particularly in the most affected communities and for marginalized residents.

Quotes from Commissioner of Precinct One and Mayor of Houston following 2022 Gun Buyback Event: "Some will say this won't make a major dent in gun violence," Ellis said. "I get it. I wish we had more power to stop the flood of guns into our streets. What we refuse to be accused of is inaction," he added.

"If we got one gun off the street and prevented one shooting, we made a difference today." (Turner)¹⁴

In 2020, 54% of all gun-related deaths in the U.S. were suicides (24,292), while 43% were murders (19,384), according to the CDC. The remaining gun deaths that year were unintentional (535), involved law enforcement (611) or had undetermined circumstances (400).

Focusing efforts through this program and other crime reduction initiatives will demonstrate that county leaders are serious about the reduction of gun violence in the most affected areas of the county.

Promotional materials and communications for each event will focus on these populations and simultaneously be open to all county residents. Precinct community engagement departments as well as community partners such as Moms Demand Action and gun control advocate groups to include community leaders will be consulted and coordinated with to garner needed community support. As each target area is different, respective county department community engagement groups will make contact with community leaders in each identified community to determine the best location to hold a future gun buyback event as well as to coordinate a communications campaign for the event tailored to that community.

Possible locations may include churches, community centers, offices of non-profit organizations, and community parks. Events sites will be selected based upon community input, property owner support, and ability of law enforcement officials to secure the area and execute any buyback event in a manner that promotes public safety with limited disruption to area residents.

Host Attendees:

¹⁴ Alan Zuvaich, Houston Public Media (University of Houston), A Houston gun buyback event nets 845 guns — and prompts criticism from the Harris County DA, [A Houston gun buyback event nets 845 guns — and prompts criticism from the Harris County DA – Houston Public Media](#), August 1, 2022, last accessed August 8, 2022.

Respective County Commissioner and Staff
Other elected officials from state and local levels
County Sheriff/HCSO Officials
HCPH Staff and Violence Prevention Services
Members of identified gun safety advocacy groups (ex. Moms Demand Action, Everytown for Gun Safety, and Texas Gun Sense)
Community Leaders within participating communities (to be identified)

Gun safety and associated public health materials will be provided to the public and all participating residents during each buyback event. These materials will be coordinated with Harris County Public Health, the Sheriff's Office, and supporting community partner organizations. Materials may include gun safety and violence disruption resources and contact information, gun locks, as well as information for victims of domestic and other forms of specific violence. In addition to this, representatives from each government organization will be present to answer questions from participating residents directly during each event.

4. How does your project minimize additional burdens and maximize benefits for disproportionately impacted groups?

County gun buyback events, while focusing on most affected and gun-violence-prone areas, will be open to all county residents and incentivize submitting firearms to law enforcement authorities for processing and destruction. A no questions asked policy may serve to ensure maximum participation and reduce fear of encountering issues with law enforcement officials while reducing the number of guns across communities that can be lost, stolen, obtained by individuals that may use them to harm themselves or others.

Participants will be required to provide a valid form of photo ID, however, no questions will be asked of participants regarding firearms they choose to turn in at one of the events. Data has shown through the successful execution of gun buyback events in other jurisdictions that members of communities are much more likely to participate if it is a specific policy that no questions will be asked of them regarding how the person came to possess or own a weapon being submitted for turn in.

However, for statistical research purposes, efforts will be made to passively identify group demographics and document the reasoning for individual weapon turn-ins when participants agree to voluntarily provide this information.

In addition to this, the monetary amounts associated with gift cards will be tiered in a manner that promotes a maximum turn-in rate for handguns (\$150) and assault rifles (\$200) as handguns are most often used to commit violent crimes, and assault rifles are the most destructive type of firearm available to civilian populations.

Note: Types of gift cards to be exchanged for firearms during buyback events will be determined using best practices from successful events held by other jurisdictions, including the City of Houston. Possible gift card options include those redeemable at local and national retailers for items that do not include firearms, firearm accessories or ammunition.

5. How does your project evaluate performance through defined metrics and provide opportunities for reflection? What do the evaluation and reflection reveal and what changes may be needed?

Gun buybacks used in conjunction with other violence prevention programs have been shown to be successful in reducing the number of firearms that could lead to injury or death. Research also shows that gun buyback programs can influence public perception of how local authorities are dealing with gun violence and may serve as opportunities to educate communities about gun violence strategies.¹⁵

Local entities within county government including HCSO, HCPH, HCCSD, community partners and others will share information with program participants and take every opportunity to educate residents about the dangers associated with firearms. All data including how many and types of guns collected, amount of materials disseminated, reasons for submitting firearms, as well as overall participation stats will be collected and used to inform program managers and partners in order to modify associated crime reduction programs to best serve residents. After Action Reviews will be conducted following each event including representatives from elected offices, HCSO, HCPH, and HCCSD, and designated partners at a minimum.

In coordination with participating organizations (HCSO, HCPH (Community Health and Violence Prevention Services), precinct staffs, and community groups to be identified based on the location of a given event, specific data regarding the event will be gathered. Data will be gathered to ensure the success of future events and include number of participants, number and types of firearms collected, amount of gift card funds expended, amount and type of gun safety materials given out, number of touch points (conversations) with participants by group, and feedback from residents and community members regarding the event. In addition to this, efforts will be made to passively identify group demographics and document the reasoning for individual weapon turn-ins when possible. A short questionnaire may also be administered to determine community views about the effectiveness of such programs and whether residents feel safer as a result of the events.

6. How are you sharing information about the project? Is it reaching people from disproportionately impacted groups?

Information regarding the countywide gun buyback program will be disseminated using standard means such as flyers, mail-outs, emails, partnerships, and any other mediums allowed by law. These communications will be targeted in areas where underserved populations reside and in communities experiencing upticks (recent or sustained) in gun violence and crime.

Partners in the dissemination of details about events and the public information campaign associated may include Harris County offices of elected officials, respective Precinct Commissioners (Community Engagement Departments), the Harris County Sheriff's Office, Harris County Public Health, Harris County Community Services Department, City of Houston, Community Partner organizations such as Moms Demand Action, Everytown for Gun Safety, and Texas Gun Sense. Event public information campaigns will include flyers detailing each event, the reasoning for these events (crime prevention and reduction stats, as well as participants and supporters of the events. Information to be distributed will be provided to each supporting entity to disseminate by agreed upon means to the widest audience throughout the county. Information campaigns will also provide focus to communities affected most by gun violence and provide information regarding participation requirements and violence reduction resources.

During the events, information will be disseminated regarding the accessibility of crime reduction programs funded by the county and available to area residents. In addition to this gun safety

¹⁵ Clark Merrefield, The Journalist's Resource, Informing the News, Criminal Justice, Health, Politics & Government, Gun Buybacks: What the Research Says, [Gun buyback programs: Here's what the research says \(journalistsresource.org\)](https://journalistsresource.org/gun-buyback-programs-heres-what-the-research-says/), January 9, 2020, last accessed, March 8, 2022.

information will be provided by Public Health and other partners to include resources involving suicide prevention.

The results of each event should be maintained on a county website with running totals and be accessible to the public. Information should include location and date of events, participation rates, feedback from participants, violence reduction resources contact information, and the results of each event. This information should also be shared with local media to ensure residents are aware of program successes.

Flyer from Buyback Event July 2022 City of Houston and HC Pct. 1

Mayor Sylvester Turner
CITY OF HOUSTON



Commissioner Rodney Ellis
HARRIS COUNTY PCT 1

PRESENT

GUN BUYBACK



Turn in your firearms to receive gift cards. No questions asked!



Transport your firearms unloaded and in the trunk of your vehicle.

*Gift card quantities are limited and subject to availability.



\$50

Gift card for non-functioning firearm

\$100

Gift card for rifles or shotguns

\$150

Gift card for handgun

\$200

Gift card for an automatic rifle

SATURDAY
JULY 30, 2022

TIME
8:00am - noon

LOCATION
WHEELER AVE. BAPTIST CHURCH
3826 WHEELER AVENUE
HOUSTON, TX 77004

QUESTIONS?

contact: (832-393-6772 or
coh_policing_reform@houstontx.gov



<https://www.houstontx.gov/onesafehouston>