



The State of  
American Philanthropy

Giving for  
Violence  
Prevention

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## ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

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## ABOUT THE STATE OF AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

The State of American Philanthropy is a series of background papers on important topics and trends in U.S. philanthropy. The papers draw on past research and reporting by IP writers, as well as new interviews, grantmaking data, and other sources. Learn more at [insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy](https://insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy).

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence prevention is a perennially underfunded area of philanthropy, with subtopics straddling criminal justice reform, gender justice, mental health (see separate SAP briefs on those topics) and more. This paper analyzes recent trends, changes, successes and challenges within the myriad areas of violence prevention philanthropy, including:

- Gun violence prevention
- Urban and youth violence prevention
- Interpersonal violence prevention, including sexual violence, gender-based violence, domestic violence and child abuse
- Programs for at-risk people and youth such as restorative justice, offender rehabilitation, and services for survivors

Perhaps the most notable attribute of this area of philanthropy is simply its lack of funding—which, not incidentally, mirrors the larger societal neglect of the problem of violence in the United States.

Philanthropy's commitments to ending gender-based violence, for example, are alarmingly small compared to the scope of the problem. A 2022 [report](#) from the U.N. found that only .0002% of total global funding went to organizations working to end gender-based violence. Amid these funding shortfalls, the violence continues. Whether we're talking about gender-based violence, sexual violence, child abuse or gun violence (which includes suicide, gang violence and domestic violence), the presence of violence is insidious, pervasive and imbedded.

## Who's Giving and Who's Getting

- Community foundations have historically been very active in the violence prevention space, with local funders establishing their own programs or supplementing those run by county and city governments. Prominent examples include the Chicago Community Trust and the New York Women's Foundation. A large number of small community foundations across the U.S. work in this space.
- Legacy foundations, collaborative funds and LLCs piloted by living donors are increasingly involved with violence prevention programs, particularly within criminal justice reform portfolios.
- Collaborative funds have emerged as successful vehicles to attract big dollars to topic areas like gun violence prevention that have historically struggled to attract funding.
- Major areas of funding include programs for at-risk youth, restorative justice programs, domestic violence shelters, services for survivors, community-based violence intervention programs, legal advocacy, violence prevention research, and narrative change.

## The Big Issues and Funding Trends

- Funders increasingly support violence prevention through community development rather than the traditional criminal justice system. Emphasis has shifted from prioritizing after-the-fact punishment and victim services to upstream prevention. This transition has created challenges and new questions, including how to partner with constituent organizers and community-based organizations; the best ways to partner with law enforcement; and how to create effective “narrative change” programs targeting socialization, gender norms and cultural attitudes.
- Approaching violence prevention with a public health toolkit is becoming popular and successful, particularly in the gun violence prevention space. Philanthropic funders increasingly focus grant dollars on research, launching pilot programs, supporting programs that address root causes like trauma and poverty, and building partnerships with public health and governmental entities.
- Partnerships with the public sector have become more important thanks to new federal laws and initiatives. These include the Safer Communities Act, passed by the Biden-Harris administration in 2022, and the U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, announced in 2023.
- When violent crime rates spiked in 2020 and 2021, violence prevention funders felt an urgency to scale up successful violence prevention programs. Violent crime rates have since declined, yet funders have needed to combat a fierce conservative backlash that champions punitive approaches and that seeks to expand the bloated, failing system of mass incarceration.

## Equity in the Sector

- An equity analysis is central to violence prevention philanthropy. Minority and vulnerable communities are more likely to be impacted by violence—as perpetrators, survivors, or both.
- Larger funders have stepped up their efforts to fund BIPOC-led, LGBTQI-led and constituent-led organizations, as well as to empower these organizations with multi-year, general operating support grants. There is a new focus on survivor-led justice, ranging from healing programs for survivors to centering and implementing survivor solutions to the problem of violence.
- There remains a troubling lack of funding for mental health and substance abuse programs, as well as programs focused on Latinx, Native American, and immigrant populations impacted by violence.
- Racial equity funder collaboratives, such as Grantmakers for Girls of Color, are becoming important sources of support for violence prevention organizations.

Violence prevention funders and their grantees face deep challenges, even as they actively harness novel solutions. Recent social movements brought attention to violence prevention causes. These notably included the #MeToo movement, the racial justice uprisings in 2020 that forced a larger societal reckoning with police violence, and the youth movement that emerged after the deadly Parkland High School shooting in 2018. The passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in 2022 was a moment of vindication, indicating that national change—even if frustratingly small in scope—is indeed possible.

Gun violence prevention and interpersonal violence prevention remain among the most underfunded areas in philanthropy. Funders, nonprofits, and activists alike have increasingly shifted their attention to subverting the long-standing cultural, institutional, legal and political realities that stand in the way of lasting change.

# Introduction

Violence prevention is an innovative, evolving area of philanthropy that stands at the intersections of criminal justice reform, gender equity, safety and community development. Some of the newer violence prevention methods are novel and emergent, including cognitive behavioral interventions and hospital-based violence prevention. In the areas of gender-based violence, domestic violence, and sexual violence, funders combine older methods—like counseling and temporary housing for survivors—with newer methods to end the cycle of abuse through cultural change, healing and community engagement.

The problem of violence has been a central instigator behind social movements that seek transformative change and accountability. In 2017, this was the #MeToo movement, demanding attention for the plague of gender-based sexual violence. In 2018, a student-led movement organized the March For Our Lives to protest gun violence. In 2020, the most widespread protests in modern U.S. history erupted in unified resistance to state-sanctioned violence and police brutality. With each passing year, the relentless barrage of mass shootings—at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas; at a bar in Lewiston, Maine; at a dance studio in Monterey Park, California—keeps the epidemic of gun violence squarely in the public conversation.

Compared with many other wealthy nations around the world, people within the U.S. experience remarkably high levels of violence. The [gun homicide rate](#) in the United States, for

example, is 25 times higher than the combined average for all other wealthy nations.

Gun violence is the leading cause of death for [Black men ages 15 to 34](#). A [2018 analysis](#) of the 193 member countries of the U.N. ranked the U.S. the 10th worst country for women, largely due to the prevalence of sexual violence, interpersonal violence, and gun violence.

Despite these jarring realities, violence prevention is not a priority for the vast majority of U.S. funders. The subtopics of gun violence prevention and interpersonal violence prevention, in particular, are acutely underfunded.

At Inside Philanthropy, our writers have struggled to adequately convey the extent of this under-resourcing. A [2016 article](#) about funding for intimate partner violence prevention noted that “despite the scope and consequences, funders are still surprisingly scarce.” On the same topic, a [2021 article](#) characterized funding as “miniscule,” noting that a Candid grant search for domestic violence organizations turned up 74 organizations, whereas a search for animal welfare programs turned up 18,000 organizations. In another [2021 article](#), Inside Philanthropy writer Philip Rojc lamented that “for all the carnage—over 43,000 gun violence deaths in the supposed lockdown year of 2020—philanthropy’s footprint in the gun violence prevention space is far from deep.”

This brief will highlight grant data, recent news and research, past coverage of violence prevention at Inside Philanthropy, and

interviews with key funders to provide an assessment of the current trajectory, challenges, and themes within violence prevention philanthropy. This is an under-resourced area of philanthropy that struggles to attract the funding that it needs. In the area of gun violence, this is partly because of political deadlock and the influence of the National Rifle Association (NRA). In the areas of gender-based and sexual violence, the perennial funding shortfalls are associated with the larger failure to properly fund gender equity and justice.

For the purposes of this brief, “violence prevention” includes the funding areas of interpersonal violence (including domestic violence, gender-based violence, and child abuse), sexual violence and sexual harassment, crime prevention, gun violence prevention, and the various programming areas that serve as alternatives to the traditional criminal justice system for violent offenders or people at risk of violence, including restorative justice, healing justice, programs for at-risk youth, and rehabilitation of offenders. Taken together, these programs represent an ongoing experiment in strategies for reducing violence apart from the punitive U.S. legal system, which has relied on mass incarceration as the primary means of dealing with violent offenders.

The subtopics listed above are not typically found within the same funding portfolios at major U.S. philanthropies. Gun violence prevention, for example, is typically housed within a criminal justice reform program; interpersonal violence prevention work might be found within a gender justice or equity portfolio. The absence of funding programs dedicated exclusively to

violence prevention is, in and of itself, part of why violence prevention nonprofits struggle to attract grant dollars.

This Violence Prevention brief was inspired by our recent State of American Philanthropy report on Criminal Justice Reform, found [here](#). While researching this report, we identified several “orphan causes” that are widely recognized as important, yet don’t occupy clearly delineated areas within the philanthropic landscape. These issues – like gun violence prevention, domestic violence prevention, child abuse prevention and childhood sexual abuse prevention—are all types of violence prevention. We decided to dig deeper and weave together the disparate threads with this brief.

The exploration of grant data within this report excludes the overlapping issues of human rights, civil rights, LGBTQ rights, demilitarization efforts, and human trafficking, in part because many U.S.-based funders focus on the international context for these issues, and in part because other State of American Philanthropy papers cover these issues. While these are excluded from the data, they will be included in our conversation and analysis. LGBTQ+ and BIPOC-led civil rights organizations and funders, in particular, are involved in violence prevention even though they’re not primarily considered violence prevention organizations. Nonprofits and funders such as the Fund for Trans Generations, Latino Justice, the Horizons Foundation, Justice for Migrant Women, and Solutions Not Punishment all explicitly devote part of their programming or funding to violence prevention work.

There are many overlaps between the subtopics of violence prevention philanthropy. A number of gun violence prevention organizations, for example, highlight the relevance of domestic violence in their work; conversely, funders of interpersonal violence prevention might also fund efforts to curb gun violence. Meanwhile, the recent proliferation of healing and restorative justice organizations approach the problem of violence with an intersectional, inclusive lens that aims to disrupt the cycles of violence and trauma both between individuals and within communities. What generally unites the different types of violence prevention organizations and funders is a growing awareness of intersectionality paired with a desire to address the root causes.

Aleyamma Mathew, the executive director of the Collective Future Fund (CFF), spoke in a recent [interview](#) with IP's Martha Ramirez about why violence prevention is often overlooked by institutional funders. CFF formed in 2018 as an outgrowth of the #MeToo movement to fund grassroots organizations working on interpersonal violence prevention. While CFF amassed support from a number of mainstream funders, including Ford Foundation and Melinda French Gates' Pivotal Ventures, it is one of the only existing funds focused specifically on gender-based violence in the United States.

According to Mathew, the lack of an intersectional approach in philanthropy often relegates violence prevention work as a smaller area within larger funding programs for racial justice or gender justice, which in turn means that organizations focusing primarily on safety get little to no funding. Mathew believes that

breaking away from siloed funding areas will be essential to properly address the problem of violence, which is inherently intersectional and touches many topic areas including labor, racial justice, women's equity, and LGBTQI rights. "Our mandate at CFF is not only to fund movements that are working to end gender-based violence, but it's also to raise the visibility of the ways that violence is used as a strategic tool within larger patriarchal and white supremacist systems," Mathew said. "I think we both want to problematize these legacies of violence and see how they show up institutionally and culturally, but we also want to really lift up these legacies of work—movement-building work—toward equity, by centering violence."

In a 2023 *Inside Philanthropy* op-ed, leaders at The Collective, a group of NYC-based BIPOC women organizers, made a similar point about violence prevention and intersectionality. They argued that philanthropy's support for gender-based violence prevention remains critically low despite new funders like MacKenzie Scott. "Grants that focus on gender-based violence can no longer be viewed through the narrow prism of 'women's issues,'" they wrote. "Violence against women and gender nonconforming people can just as easily turn into a wider public safety issue ... we believe funders urgently need to start paying attention to the critically escalating problem of gender-based violence, which, without intervention from funders, is only bound to get worse."

# The Lay of the Land

## Who's Giving

Funding for violence prevention has slowly but steadily increased in the past several decades. Looking more narrowly at the past several years, violence prevention nonprofits enjoyed a donations spike in 2020 when the racial justice protests attracted funders to criminal justice reform. Yet in the years since 2020, funder interest in violence prevention has waned, corresponding to a general downward trend in funding for criminal justice reform.

There is reason to hope this downward trend is temporary. Major billionaire funders like MacKenzie Scott, Laurene Powell Jobs, the Ballmers, and Melinda French Gates show a sustained interest in this area of giving. At the grassroots level, new violence prevention collaboratives are emerging. Community-based violence prevention organizations increasingly forge novel public-private partnerships that bring in new streams of revenue.

In past decades, violence prevention efforts were largely spearheaded by community foundations serving specific cities or states, with a handful of national foundations with criminal justice or gender equity portfolios providing funding as well. In the area of domestic violence, foundations associated with corporations, such as the Mary Kay, Avon, and All State foundations, have also been involved.

But in general, community foundations have provided the most sustained private support, often as a supplement to governmental funding.

This is true for both interpersonal violence (including domestic, gender-based and sexual violence) and street violence (including urban violence and the rehabilitation of violent offenders).

### 10 Violence Prevention Funders to Know

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

The Just Trust

Yield Giving

Ballmer Group

Schusterman Family Philanthropies

Joyce Foundation

Chicago Community Trust

Arnold Ventures

Ford Foundation

Annie E. Casey Foundation

In recent years, large private foundations and living donor LLCs—often national in scope—have been more involved, particularly regarding gun violence, alternatives to incarceration, police violence, rehabilitation of offenders, restorative justice and survivor-led justice initiatives. There are more collaborative funding efforts, public-private partnerships, and funding from celebrity donors. Corporations have historically avoided violence prevention philanthropy, particularly anything related to gun violence and violent crime.

Data from Candid’s grants database indicates that active violence prevention funders in recent years include the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ballmer Group, and Arnold Ventures. Other large givers include the Chicago Community Trust, which funds a wide and growing array of violence prevention strategies, and Foundation to Promote Open Society, which supports public safety work both in the U.S. and internationally. (Candid data does not capture all violence prevention funding, including from major donors such as MacKenzie Scott and Laurene Powell Jobs.)

Not all criminal justice reform work is violence prevention work, but a significant portion is, especially within the programming areas of community violence intervention, alternatives to incarceration, and programs to end the cycle of violence by supporting healing and trauma-informed initiatives. We can therefore expect that, in general, trends in violence prevention philanthropy will dovetail with trends in violence prevention philanthropy. A [2022 analysis](#) of Candid data by The Bridgespan Group found that funding for criminal justice reform grew to an all-time high of \$632 million in 2020, then declined to \$341 million in 2021 and less than \$400 million in 2022. While Candid data is imperfect and does not capture all funding, the general downward trend seems clear.

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) is a major criminal justice reform funder via CZI’s justice reform spinoff organization, The Just Trust. CZI is a limited liability corporation (LLC) funded by Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan. A handful of other LLCs piloted by living donors are major

violence prevention funders. These include the Ballmer Group, Arnold Ventures, Open Philanthropy, Schusterman Family Philanthropies, Emerson Collective, Yield Giving, and Pivotal Ventures. We will explore these LLCs in the Major Donors section of this report.

Collaborative funds, giving circles, and funds housed at women’s foundations are another source of funding for violence prevention. Examples include the Hope and Heal Fund in California; the Fund for the Me Too Movement and Allies at the New York Women’s Foundation; the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities in Chicago; the Fund for a Safer Future (national); the Collective Future Fund (national); and the Just Beginnings Collaborative (national). The vital role of women’s foundations will be explored in depth in the Community Foundations section of this report.

Corporate givers have funded violence prevention, often in a limited capacity linked to mass shootings or current social trends. Following the rapid growth of the #MeToo movement, corporations like Uber and CBS [provided funding](#) to sexual violence prevention organizations. In the area of gun violence—which has historically been anathema for corporations—there was some movement (albeit relatively small) in 2018, following the deadly shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida, and again in 2022 after the massacre at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. And in the areas of restorative justice and incarceration alternatives, [corporate funders](#) like Microsoft, Google and

Sony have all been givers. Notably, Microsoft was the only corporate partner among 13 private philanthropic funders in the Biden-Harris administration's [anti-violence collaborative](#), an 18-month initiative that [began in 2021](#) and ended in December 2022.

Individual and celebrity donors contributed to anti-violence work in 2017 during the height of the #MeToo movement, and again in 2020, when police violence and incarceration alternatives were in the spotlight. In 2020 and again in 2023, MacKenzie Scott [granted](#) large sums to organizations focused on violence prevention.

In total, Candid data from 2018 to 2022 captures approximately \$6.2 billion in crime and violence prevention funding. This number encapsulates the combined categories of abuse prevention (including sexual abuse and child abuse), domestic violence, crime prevention (which includes gun violence), and funding for the rehabilitation of offenders. Candid grant data

across all funding areas between 2018 and 2022 totals about \$950 billion. Violence prevention funding thus comprises a meager .65% of the total philanthropic giving captured by Candid.

The insufficiency of this number is underscored by the fact that this data takes into account all types of violence prevention, including sexual violence, domestic violence, community-based prison alternatives, violent crime prevention, gun violence prevention, and neighborhood anti-violence programs. This report will deeply explore how violence prevention philanthropy, while chronically underfunded, is in a phase of growth and innovation, with an intense new focus on creating safe communities, research and data collection, restorative justice, healing from trauma, a public health approach to gun violence, and survivor-focused initiatives.

## Who's Getting

There are many ways to track which types of organizations attract violence prevention funding. [Candid's data-tagging](#) identifies violence prevention funding by a number of umbrella categories and subcategories, which provides a helpful starting point. One of these umbrella categories is abuse prevention, including the subcategories of child abuse, sexual abuse, elder abuse, and domestic violence. The total 2018-2022 funding amount for abuse prevention was approximately \$3.2 billion. Domestic violence funding totaled less than \$500 million between 2018 and 2022.

Interestingly, the separate category of domestic violence shelters, which Candid categorizes as a supportive housing service, saw more than quadruple the funding as the domestic violence

## Inside Philanthropy Survey

*"The #MeToo movement has brought about a lot of interest in women's issues and domestic violence. There is a greater dialogue being had and an interest in learning about domestic violence. Also, the conversation around toxic masculinity and how it relates to male victims of domestic violence will continue to grow interest in our field."*

—Fundraiser, Reading, Pennsylvania

category— at over \$2.3 billion between 2018 and 2022. This tracks with philanthropy’s historical focus on providing [services to victims](#) rather than advocacy, prevention, and addressing the root causes of violence. As we will explore in subsequent sections of this brief, this is changing, while services for survivors continue to be important.

Another major Candid category is crime prevention, which includes funding for gun safety and community violence prevention, at-risk youth programs, public-private collaborations with police agencies, substance abuse prevention and cybercrime. Total funding levels for crime prevention, 2018–2022, was about \$2.2 billion.

Notably, total funding for the gun control subcategory within crime prevention, 2018–2022, totaled only \$273 million, with a significant portion attributable to 2018 on the heels of the Parkland shooting. Other violence prevention categories include rehabilitation for offenders (\$298 million) and prison alternatives (\$652 million).

Some violence prevention topic areas, in particular prison alternatives and offender rehabilitation, saw funding surges as part of philanthropy’s racial justice renaissance in 2020. This surge proved temporary. Nonprofits are grappling with how to attract sustained, long-term funding. Similarly, funding surges for sexual violence prevention associated with the #MeToo movement in 2017 proved fleeting.

There is often significant overlap between violence prevention funding categories. Many

prison alternative programs, for example, are housed within restorative justice organizations that also provide services for survivors of violent crime. Indeed, the traditional division of philanthropic funding into categories that refer to the crime survivor (“victim services”) and the crime perpetrator (“prison alternatives”) does not effectively reflect the reality on the ground, where restorative justice and healing justice organizations often work with both survivor and perpetrator (often, individuals themselves are both survivors and perpetrators).

### 10 Violence Prevention Grantees to Know

Research Foundation of the City  
University of New York

Everytown for Gun Safety  
Support Fund

Johns Hopkins Center for Gun  
Violence Solutions

Collective Future Fund

Alliance for Safety and Justice

RAINN

Fund for a Safer Future

Giffords Law Center

New Venture Fund

Chicago CRED

An example of this intersectionality is the Alliance for Safety and Justice, a multi-state organization that aims to “replace over-incarceration with more effective public safety solutions rooted in crime prevention,

community health, rehabilitation and support for crime victims.” Its core programming areas straddle the traditional divide between violence prevention (focused on would-be perpetrators of violence) and survivor services and advocacy. The alliance’s Time Done initiative advocates for the removal of legal and employment barriers for the formerly incarcerated, while its flagship Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice program advocates for survivor-centered public safety solutions that prioritize prevention and recovery rather than incarceration.

Another major violence prevention recipient is the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, which received \$81 million between 2018 and 2022. Notably, a sizable portion of donations within this timeframe came in the form of small individual DAF contributions via Fidelity Investments in 2022, the year of the elementary school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. Gun violence prevention organizations rely heavily on small individual donations in response to mass shootings.

The Everytown fund is the “education, research, and education arm” of Everytown for Gun Safety, the largest gun violence prevention organization in the U.S. In prior years, Bloomberg Philanthropies was a major supporter, but that support has phased out. Everytown was created in 2013 when Mayors Against Illegal Guns and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America joined forces. The majority of seed funding for Everytown and its initiatives came from billionaire businessperson and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Everytown’s support base has

expanded over the years as Bloomberg has shifted focus to supporting “gun sense” political candidates.

Everytown’s prominence and general ability to attract funding is not representative of the gun violence prevention space in general, which receives [comparatively little](#) from philanthropic funders. This isn’t from a lack of interest, intent or passion for the subject, but because of the past political influence of the NRA and cultural beliefs about limiting gun ownership. As we will explore in the Opportunities and Challenges section, a growing base of philanthropic supporters are beginning to approach the epidemic of gun violence as a public health and safety crisis, focusing more on prevention, community safety and cultural change, all while creating renewed legal strategies that focus more on state and county rather than federal law.

Other nonprofits receiving large shares of funder dollars include Project Harmony (a child abuse prevention nonprofit in Nebraska), New Venture Fund, the Sojourner Family Peace Center (domestic violence prevention and intervention in Wisconsin), several gun violence prevention research initiatives at major universities, including the Research Foundation of the City University of New York, and Chicago CRED (a newer violence prevention organization seeded and largely funded by Laurene Powell Jobs’ Emerson Collective).

As this sampling indicates, much work in the violence prevention space is local. This is especially true for interpersonal and sexual violence, where larger national initiatives and

collaborations are few—and where philanthropic support is often a supplement to government contracts and grants.

In recent years, national campaigns and advocacy efforts related to violence prevention have begun to emerge, particularly in the area of youth violence and gun violence prevention. These collaboratives are often supported by criminal justice reform funders. There are also new streams of funding for research and advocacy efforts vis-a-vis crime and violence prevention.

### Initiative Spotlight **EVERYTOWN LAW**

An initiative of Everytown for Gun Safety, Everytown Law is “the largest team of litigators in the country dedicated to advancing gun safety in the courts and through the civil and criminal justice systems.” Its team works with private citizens and governments providing free legal representation and guidance on gun safety and gun safety laws across the country.

Restorative justice organizations in particular are receiving increased attention from funders. Many of these organizations are newer and smaller, but they’re growing. Impact Justice, a leading restorative justice nonprofit, defines restorative justice as “addressing harm through dialogue.” These programs implement a restorative, rather than punitive, approach to

solving the problem of violence. This includes pre-arrest diversion, which means preventing arrest by providing mental health services, trauma counseling, and a panoply of services for at-risk youth such as education and job training programs.

Other types of restorative justice programming include help for substance abuse, dialogues between victim and perpetrator, and opportunities to accept accountability for the harm caused. Research organizations like the Brennan Center for Justice and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice increasingly **prioritize** research into the efficacy of these types of safety efforts.

These programs are particularly prevalent within juvenile justice (“meeting survivor needs without reliance on youth criminalization,” as Impact Justice puts it) and centering survivor-identified needs in intimate partner violence and sexual harm. Taken together, these restorative justice pilot programs are essentially test balloons for a complete reimagining of the justice system.

Organizations involved in this work include Common Justice, the Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice, Survivors Agenda, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, the Transformational Prison Project, the Black Youth Project 100’s (BYP100) She Safe, We Safe campaign, Youth Advocate Programs (YAP), Contra Costa Family Justice Center, the National Black Women’s Justice Institute, FreeFrom, and Futures Without Violence.

### The Big Issues and Debates

Violence prevention philanthropy has shifted and expanded, as a larger societal discussion has taken root about public safety and the desired balance between law enforcement methods and

prioritizing community health, safety and development. Thanks in large part to grassroots organizing and movement-building associated with organizations like the Movement for Black Lives, more funders—even centrist and right-of-center funders—are now questioning whether mass incarceration is the best solution for violent crime. The “tough on crime” era of the 1980s and 1990s centered on law enforcement and legal system reforms as the go-to strategies for addressing violence. But now, grantors and nonprofits alike are adopting a holistic life-cycle approach centering the creation of safe, healthy and economically vibrant communities.

In other words, the lenses through which violence prevention is viewed have changed, particularly among progressive funders and organizations. Major funders are finally heeding the long-standing calls of grassroots organizations to prioritize community-based solutions to local problems—and as a result, constituents, crime survivors, crime perpetrators and community-based organizations now play a larger role in violence prevention philanthropy and its funding priorities. The solutions to violence put forth by a Black crime survivor in an urban neighborhood might look different than the solutions proposed by a white, Ivy League-educated attorney serving as executive director of a criminal justice reform nonprofit.

“I have noticed that lately, there is an increased emphasis on community-driven strategy development,” said Jennifer Keeling, chief of partnerships and operations at Chicago CRED, a gun violence prevention organization, in an interview for this report. CRED was one of the six founding funders of the Partnership for Safe and

Peaceful Communities, a violence prevention funding collaborative that has committed \$140 million to violence reduction efforts in Chicago since 2016. In her role at CRED, Keeling oversees the partnership’s philanthropic collaborations, which number over 50 foundations and funders.

“Many years ago, it was more the case that you would have researchers and public sector leaders, and some nonprofit leaders, coming together to develop a strategy and figure out a plan and implement it,” Keeling continued. “This doesn’t get to the root of what people are experiencing, and starting from their perspective and building from there. People know what their

## Funder Spotlight

# THE JUST TRUST

Formed in 2022 with \$350 million in seed funding from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, The Just Trust envisions a justice system that prevents crime, centers safety, and fosters real accountability, rehabilitation, and healing.

Taking a state-based approach, the trust supports efforts that are shrinking the footprint of the criminal justice system; advocating for alternatives to historical approaches to crime and violence; building a more humane justice system; and working on proactive solutions centered on safety and crime prevention.

neighborhoods need. It's our job in philanthropy to listen and work with the community in a true engagement process. And I have seen philanthropy taking that to heart."

Along with these changing priorities are new debates and growing pains, as funders and nonprofits question past priorities and launch pilot projects to test the viability of new strategies. Some of the big issues now attracting funder attention include:

**Disrupting the Cycles of Trauma and Violence.** The philosophy of prevention rather than punishment undercuts so many of today's newer violence prevention efforts. Lucia Corral Peña, chief program director for the Blue Shield of California Foundation, spoke with Inside Philanthropy about her foundation's widening priorities. While Blue Shield once focused mostly on supporting survivors after they experience abuse, a new priority is ending the cycle of abuse and violence.

"Our systems are oriented around crisis interventions," says Peña. "And in the domestic violence field, that means law enforcement engagement or the domestic violence shelter system." Peña says that in earlier years, Blue Shield was more involved with funding and engaging with crisis intervention models. And while it continues to fund the core safety net of the shelter system, beginning in 2018, Blue Shield overhauled its giving priorities to prioritize multi-generational violence prevention and cultural change. Its domestic violence program is now called Break the Cycle of Domestic Violence.

"When a child is a witness to domestic violence or a victim of physical or sexual violence, that is a huge risk factor for future perpetration and victimization," Peña says. "It sounds obvious, but the field [philanthropy] wasn't looking at that perspective, and was largely focused on victimization. But there is so much fuel propelling this cycle of abuse," Peña says. "So you need to be focused on also addressing trauma and healing."

Addressing multigenerational trauma is becoming an important strategy for all types of violence prevention organizations and funders, and is a major part of restorative justice and healing justice programming. That said, emergency services for victims continue to be a priority, and organizations like Blue Shield are experimenting with the correct balance between prevention and victim services.

**The Role of Law Enforcement.** Funders and nonprofits are grappling with how, and whether, to partner with law enforcement as part of their violence prevention work. Police violence and brutality is now a more prominent part of the conversation, and over-policing is widely understood as part of the problem of violence in the U.S. Many funders support programs to prevent police violence and increase accountability for police violence while also partnering—sometimes extensively—with police departments on other safety initiatives.

There are, in fact, many active and successful collaborations between violence prevention funders, violence prevention nonprofits and law enforcement. For many years, these

collaborations were the default. Arnold Ventures and the MacArthur Foundation are two of the larger funders that collaborate extensively with law enforcement. Their programs include working with law enforcement to connect homeless people to services; training law enforcement to assist in outreach with mental health professionals; and partnering with law enforcement on data collection and analysis on issues ranging from parole policy to predicting which individuals in a community are most likely to commit a violent crime.

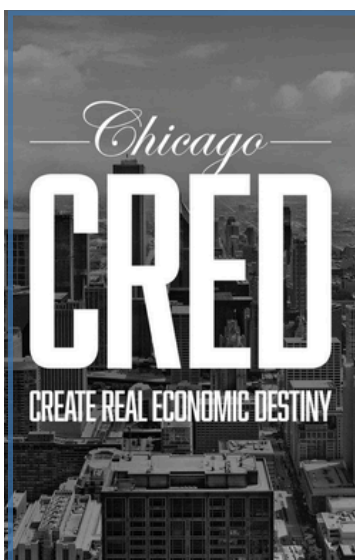
According to Jennifer Keeling at Chicago CRED, collaborations between police and community-based nonprofits working on violence reduction do happen, but are spotty at best. “There are a lot of areas where we can work alongside police officers or police commanders,” Keeling says, “where there is a realization that there are different roles we can play – having an outreach worker come will have a different outcome than cars coming in with lights and sirens. So that kind of working together happens in Chicago, but it’s not something that is institutionalized within CPD [Chicago Police Department], or at the level of CPD fundamentally changing how it

does community policing. And that’s ultimately where we need to get to.”

### **Widening Approaches to Gun Violence**

**Prevention.** In the past several years, gun violence prevention funders have pivoted, and are now funding a wider array of strategies in their efforts to address the massive problem of gun violence. In past decades, gun violence prevention prioritized legal and policy changes. While these remain central to the strategy, a new public health orientation centers research, education, and [community violence intervention strategies](#) (CVI), which this brief explores further in the following section.

“For too long, the gun violence crisis in America has been viewed primarily through a criminal justice lens,” says David Brotherton, a philanthropy advisor who was previously the fund advisor for gun violence prevention at Kendeda Fund. “From policymakers to law enforcement to the philanthropic community, society has wrongly viewed the problem as one of laws and enforcement and criminalization. That thinking is wholly insufficient and largely misguided, in my view. Fortunately, though, the



*“There are a lot of areas where we can work alongside police officers or police commanders where there is a realization that there are different roles we can play—having an outreach worker come will have a different outcome than cars coming in with lights and sirens. So that kind of working together happens in Chicago, but it’s not something that is institutionalized within CPD [Chicago Police Department], or at the level of CPD fundamentally changing how it does community policing. And that’s ultimately where we need to get to.”*

—Jennifer Keeling, chief of partnerships and operations, Chicago CRED

tide is turning, and funders, to their credit, are seeing gun violence as the public health crisis that it actually is.”

When gun violence—which includes accidents and suicides—is viewed as a public health crisis rather than primarily as a criminal matter, the need for research and prevention becomes clear. “Much in the same way we address an outbreak of a virus or infectious disease, so, too, can we address the root causes of gun violence at the source,” Brotherton says. In addition to having led the GVP program at Kendeda, Brotherton was the vice chair at Fund for a Safer Future (FSF), a funder collaborative that launched in 2011 with five funders. Today, FSF has over 35 funders and has given \$170 million in aligned grantmaking, including support for organizations that focus on research and advocacy like the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Research and Policy, the Brady Campaign, and the Giffords Law Center. FSF’s growth is evidence of the expansion and renewed energy in the field.

Much of the new energy is targeted toward research and data, which was previously stagnant thanks to a 1996 federal budget amendment

championed by the NRA, known as the Dickey Amendment, that barred the CDC from using funds to “advocate or promote gun control.” According to Brotherton, this was “widely interpreted as prohibiting the funding of research into gun violence. That policy had a chilling effect on the GVP movement, resulting in a dearth of meaningful research across the field, which only further constrained our collective capacity to understand, or address, the problem of gun violence.”

In 2018, Congress clarified that the amendment does not prohibit federal funding for research into the causes of gun violence. The public health orientation is now becoming paramount for gun violence prevention. The clarification of the Dickey Amendment has finally emboldened funders to resource the field. After years of neglect, there is much work to be done.

“We believe that having more and better research may help develop political consensus,” said Asheley Van Ness, the former director of criminal justice at Arnold Ventures, in a statement for this report. “Agreeing on facts about gun policies is a good first step, and if we had more information about what is credibly known, we may make more progress. America’s gun violence crisis merits a robust policy response—one driven by a sense of urgency, and just as importantly, backed by evidence and data that shows interventions are effective and sustainable.”

Arnold Ventures launched the National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research in 2018 with \$20 million in seed funding. Van Ness said that one of the key data gaps, which Arnold

## Inside Philanthropy Survey

*“Policing, specifically looking at alternatives to arrests and alternative ways to fund local police departments, has become an area of intense interest since the murder of George Floyd.”*

—Foundation professional,  
New York, NY

Ventures partnered with the Joyce Foundation to address, is the basic gun data infrastructure—fundamental data on gun possession, distribution, ownership, acquisition and storage.

“Much of the problem with firearms data infrastructure can be fixed with changes in how agencies manage data and how they prioritize data collection and release,” Van Ness said. “The goal is to pair improved data infrastructure with new research into gun violence to create baseline knowledge for a public health response to the gun violence epidemic.”

### **Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships.**

Finding the best ways to leverage public-private partnerships is a central issue for violence prevention funders. On the one hand, public funding for violence prevention is vital for many violence prevention nonprofits. In the areas of domestic and sexual violence, for example, it’s common for organizations to receive most of their funding through public grants and supplemental funding through the private sector. But government funding tends to prioritize methods that the philanthropic sector is moving away from, such as over-reliance on the domestic violence shelter system as a panacea for the problem of domestic violence, or forcing survivors of violence into a bureaucracy that doesn’t address their true needs.

For those working on violence prevention in the private sector, a looming question is whether the public sector—via policies, local budgets and governmental organizations—will finally begin to embrace community-based preventative strategies on a larger scale, rather than continue to direct the vast bulk of funding to the system of mass incarceration.

The Biden administration’s various funding commitments to community-based violence intervention (CVI) methods is an indication that greater public uptake is on the horizon, as this brief will explore further. Funding for CVI was included in the 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. In 2023, the Biden-Harris administration announced its National Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence. Likewise in 2023, the administration announced an Office of Gun Violence Prevention. This new office has collaborated with community-based groups and the philanthropic sector on launching dozens of Offices of Violence Prevention across the country.

### Campaign Spotlight



Safely Home is a nationwide campaign of Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) that works collaboratively with communities to increase local capacity for at risk youth (ages 0-25) to remain living safely with their families. The campaign also aims to reduce and prevent unnecessary out-of-home placements and offers resources to help young people and their families improve their overall intellectual, physical and social well-being. Safely Home is supported by organizations such as the National Juvenile Justice Network and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

Taken together, these multiple new programs suggest that public-private partnerships will become central to violence prevention philanthropy. These programs are in a fledgling stage, and their impact is difficult to assess or predict.

Nicole Pittman, executive director at the [Just Beginnings Collaborative](#), said in a 2021 interview with Inside Philanthropy that government funding—as well as most nonprofit work—in the area of interpersonal violence is too often focused on what happens after violence has occurred, rather than working to prevent violence. “I used to be involved in the policy work,” Pittman says, “and everything we do with interpersonal violence is after the fact. We come in once the harm has happened. We have almost thrown up our hands and said, ‘it is inevitable.’ But we have to look at the conditions before harm happens—the power structures, the relationships.”

Pittman says that the government’s punitive solutions to violence are incredibly wasteful. Citing her years of experience in California working on child sexual abuse issues, Pittman says, “we will spend upwards of \$200 million [annually] on the registration of people who have committed sex offenses, things like electronic monitoring, and \$46,000 on prevention. So if we are talking about how to end harm, we can’t do it if we continue with this government model.”

One promising option for violence prevention funders and nonprofits is to steer government funders, entities and budgets in the direction of prevention-oriented strategies. One example of success with this endeavor can be found with

Youth Advocate Programs (YAP), an organization working with at-risk youth on a range of violence prevention strategies, including community-based violence interruption models, alternatives to youth incarceration and restorative justice programs. YAP partners with governments at every level, from federal to municipal, and with law enforcement and governmental agencies, including probation offices and departments of children and family services.

According to Carla Powell, chief of growth and development at YAP, communities across the country are investing in violence interruption programs—so much so, in fact, that cities now proactively approach YAP with interest in their model. Powell says that government funders are interested in alternative strategies, and communities are developing task forces for violence interruption.

“There is a conversation now about public safety, and government funders are coming to the table and saying they want to be a part of the solution,” says Powell. She adds that as more data emerges showing the effectiveness of violence prevention and interruption pilot programs, government partnership opportunities are increasing.

## Funder Trends & Strategies

Funders across the U.S. are implementing violence prevention strategies and philosophies, including legal and policy changes, data collection and research, healing programs, community health and development, community-based intervention strategies for at-risk youth, alternatives to incarceration, rehabilitation, counseling, education and job

training services for people at risk of committing or being victimized by violence, restorative justice, services and advocacy for survivors of violence, changing the cultural narratives about violence, and, increasingly, focusing on voting and local politics as a way to head off legislative, judicial and policy stalemates.

The field is in a place of self-reflection and growth. As violent crime rates fluctuated significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and the years after, violence prevention funders are assessing past failures and launching research and pilot projects to test the best pathways forward. “One of the most important funder trends we are seeing now is understanding how to resource the anti-violence field,” says Brook

Kelly-Green, senior director of gender and reproductive equity at Schusterman Family Philanthropies. “This is an evolving area that needs investment, and there is currently a void in the funder space that new and existing funders are working collaboratively to fill.”

The COVID crisis and the associated uptick in violent crime, particularly gun violence, interpersonal violence—and, worryingly, [political violence](#)—further prompted funders to reassess their strategies and double down on newer, community-based approaches, as well as the urgent need for funding research that shows these approaches to be successful. As violent crime rates went down in 2022 and 2023, funders are assessing the role that CVI methods may have played in this rebound from the violent crime spikes in 2020 and 2021.


### **Community Violence Intervention**

**strategies (CVIs).** Newer programs to combat gun violence focus on community-level interventions that attempt to reach the young people most likely to commit or be victimized by violent acts. There are multiple types of programming in this vein, and research increasingly backs up their [efficacy](#).

Faith in Action’s Live Free [campaign](#) is a prominent advocate for CVI strategies. The Live Free website helpfully [breaks down](#) three common types of CVIs: Group violence intervention (GVI), an approach implemented in collaboration with law enforcement that targets the small number of individuals who are most likely to commit violent crime; the cure violence method, which is built around “violence interrupters” working within communities; and

Coalition Spotlight

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Every Home A Safe Home

The NCADV is dedicated to survivors and holding those who cause harm accountable. It aims to change the conditions that often lead to abuse, such as racism, classism and sexism. Programs include national public policy changes, reconstructive surgery for survivors, and preventing reproductive coercion and domestic violence. NCADV’s Remember My Name project honors women, children, and men who were killed by their abusers.

hospital-based violence prevention, which trains hospital workers to work with young people hospitalized with gun injuries.

Other types of CVIs include focused deterrence, street outreach and cognitive behavioral therapy. In a broader sense, CVIs are a type of community-based intervention (CBI), a term commonly used to refer to the laundry list of broader community health and development initiatives that target at-risk people and help break the cycles of violence plaguing many communities. These might include mental health and substance abuse interventions, housing, nutrition and education services for at-risk youth.

According to Tim Daly, program director for gun violence prevention and justice reform at the Joyce Foundation, the growth of CVIs is the most obvious trend in recent years within violence prevention philanthropy. “Funders have been joining this effort significantly in recent years: Some funding the local CVI strategies themselves; others funding the development of the research base on these efforts; still others supporting policy and advocacy efforts to increase public dollars dedicated to these strategies; and finally, some investment to elevate the practice of CVI.”

In an interview for this brief, Daly was careful to delineate that while philanthropy plays an important role in bolstering research and CVI programs, it is public funding and local budgetary changes that will take violence prevention methods to scale. “CVI efforts require a policy response: Philanthropic dollars alone will never come close to scaling these programs to all of the communities that require them,” Daly

says. He also points out that an effective policy response is dependent on quality research, which, until recently, has been devastatingly lacking in the area of gun violence prevention. “If and when the funding meets the research need, we will absolutely learn a lot more about the policy and programmatic changes needed to reduce gun violence in this country.”

Newer organizations have emerged to connect the growing body of gun violence prevention research with advocacy efforts to enact policy changes based on the research. These include the California Partnership for Safe Communities, the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence and the Duke Center for Firearms Law. The National Offices of Violence Prevention Network is a newer key player that is supporting the development of state-level Offices of Violence Prevention (OVPs).

### Funder Collaborative Spotlight

## FUND FOR A SAFER FUTURE

Fund for a Safer Future is a national network of funders supporting “common-sense policy reform in targeted regions across the country.” Established in 2011, the collaborative is comprised of over 35 foundations and donors and has given \$170 million in aligned grantmaking.

Several Biden-Harris administration initiatives support CVI methods. This includes the [CVI collaborative](#), an unprecedented public-private partnership announced by the Biden administration in 2021 that ran for 18 months. The effort was followed by establishing the federal Office of Gun Violence Prevention in 2023. Philanthropies and nonprofits that have been key players in the Biden-Harris administration's efforts include the Joyce, Annie E. Casey and Ford foundations, the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, Advance Peace, the Center for American Progress, and the Vera Institute of Justice.

The CVI collaborative and the new Office of Gun Violence Prevention are major parts of the administration's larger "whole of government" [strategy](#) to combat gun violence and promote public safety. Notably, the administration's toolbox aligns with several strategies that philanthropic funders have lately been prioritizing, which include data-driven methods to target law enforcement resources to the individuals most likely to commit violent crimes; expanding services (including employment and recreational activities) for at-risk youth; and expanding reentry support systems for the formerly incarcerated.

In a [2024 Inside Philanthropy op-ed](#), Ford Foundation president Darren Walker and program officer David Rogers argue that CVI methods have now proven effective in several cities and municipalities. The pilot programs have succeeded enough that broad-scale adoption should be the next step. "The evidence is clear: CVI works," they wrote. "As CVI gains momentum, the field still needs greater

public investment. And philanthropic support is crucial to grow proof-of-concept programs into proven operations that cities — and the country — can fully embrace."

Nonprofits advocating for or implementing forms of CVI include the National Network for Safe Communities (funded in part by Google), the California Partnership for Safe Communities, Cure Violence (funded in part by MacArthur and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation), the National Network of Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs, and the Giffords Law Center.

**Direct Services for Survivors.** A large proportion of funding for interpersonal violence prevention goes to direct services, including domestic violence shelters, law enforcement programs for survivors, and counseling and mental health services. The philanthropic sector funds only a fraction of these services; domestic violence shelters and halfway houses are funded largely by government grants.

According to Peña at the Blue Shield Foundation, the preponderance of government funding for survivor services leaves domestic violence shelters vulnerable to funding cuts and line-item vetoes. Using California as an example, domestic violence shelters receive funding from the federal government via the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services, which is then distributed to state agencies or directly to survivor service programs.

After the 2008 financial recession, survivor services were cut substantially in California and other states across the country. Peña says that at the time, organizers in the field worked toward

building the private sector’s ability to fill government shortfalls. “We realized the field is vulnerable to public funding,” Peña says. “It really prompted the field to organize itself... we wanted more collaboration, leadership and diversification of funding.”



*“Our main response to rape and sexual violence is putting men behind bars to be raped. You can’t end violence with violence. We believe we have to go back to the community to resolve these issues. We’re also trying to get away from looking at Black and brown communities as ‘more likely to,’ meaning, ‘more likely to be incarcerated, more likely to die of heart disease,’ and moving to, instead, ‘more likely to be closer to the problems and closer to the solutions.’ Imagine following the lead of a people to solve an issue... it is such a different journey when their survival depends on it.”*

—Nicole Pittman, executive director,  
Just Beginnings Collaborative

In more recent years, a growing concern is that government-funded programs don’t participate much in newer violence prevention strategies, focusing instead on services to survivors and criminalization of perpetrators, who are often themselves survivors of violence. There are growing advocacy efforts to encourage public

partners to recognize that resources are needed for prevention. “So the idea is to craft or create solutions that don’t allow for things to get to a crisis point where law enforcement or shelters are your two options,” Peña says. “How do we get to people sooner?”

**Data and Research.** One of the historic challenges for anti-violence programming is that lack of data makes it difficult to determine what the problems are and how, precisely, to fix them. This is famously true in the area of gun violence prevention, where a 1996 federal gag order essentially barred the CDC from researching gun violence (this was overturned in 2018). The research gap is equally impactful for sexual and gender-based violence, where little is known from a data standpoint.

After decades of stagnation, funding for gun violence research is finally materializing. Arnold Ventures has been a trailblazing philanthropy in this area, beginning with its \$20 million in seed funding in 2018 for the National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research. In the years since, funding collaboratives like the Fund for a Safer Future have supported new research.

Government funding is increasing, too. In the 2020 fiscal year, the budgets for the Labor, Health and Human Services, and other federal agencies included \$25 million for gun violence research, split evenly between the CDC and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). A [2024 report](#) by the Yale School of Public Health found that between 2020 and 2022, the CDC and the NIH “awarded approximately \$49 million and \$100.5 million, respectively, for firearm injury prevention research.”

In the realms of sexual and domestic violence, an interesting (though underfunded) slate of new research explores connections between interpersonal violence and lifecycle factors such as poverty, housing and access to economic opportunities. The Blue Shield of California Foundation, for example, supports evidence-driven initiatives to prevent domestic violence through paid family leave policies and earned income tax credits. The Allstate Foundation, which has supported anti-domestic-violence work since 2005, funds [research](#) into financial abuse and the importance of financial security for women.

### **Survivor-Led Organizing and Healing.**

Whether we're talking about survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, or programs that rehabilitate the perpetrators of violence, nonprofit organizations are implementing programs that center the ideas and needs of survivors. More often than not, this results in efforts aimed at healing and addressing trauma for both survivors and perpetrators (often referred to as "those who cause harm"). These approaches starkly contrast with the traditional punitive approaches of the criminal justice and legal systems.

That said, many survivor-led initiatives continue to seek punishment, accountability or restitution as a form of healing and justice. This includes addressing the rape kit backlog and legal changes increasing conviction rates for perpetrators of domestic violence. Examples of the many organizations active in the survivor-led organizing and healing space include RAINN, the Joyful Heart Foundation, Black Women's Blueprint, A Long Walk Home, and the Ahimsa Collective.

**Legal Strategies.** Despite a growing appreciation for non-legalistic pathways in the pursuit of violence prevention, legal and policy changes remain vitally important. Organizations like March for Our Lives, the Giffords Center, the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, and Sandy Hook Promise work tirelessly to target specific laws and policies. Examples include the extreme risk or "red flag" laws to disarm would-be shooters; laws that prevent individuals with domestic violence convictions from obtaining firearms; background check laws; and closing gun show and online sales loopholes. There are also broader efforts to reduce the lobbying power of the NRA, to end the filibuster in the U.S. Senate, and to develop Second Amendment scholarship and litigation strategies to defend evidence-based gun policies against extreme gun rights policies.

In a [2023 op-ed](#) for Inside Philanthropy, Fund for a Safer Future executive director Talia Rivera emphasized the importance of extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) in reducing gun violence. Since 2014, 21 states have adopted or strengthened ERPOs. Rivera attributes these policy wins to "research and advocacy efforts in state capitols and local communities across the nation." She cautions that "our challenge now is to continue to invest in these lifesaving solutions, to strengthen and expand them."

Tim Daly at the Joyce Foundation says that while "the political landscape has not made it easy to chart a path of meaningful federal policy reform, philanthropy has found other paths to help drive reform and change—often at the state and local levels." As an example, Daly likewise cited recent success with local efforts to implement risk prevention strategies designed to keep guns away

from those most likely to misuse them, as well as new types of [court orders](#) allowing law enforcement and families to keep guns out of the hands of people at most risk of violence.

In the areas of gender-based and sexual violence, legal goals include lobbying Congress to increase funding for survivor services via changes to the Victims of Crime Act; ending the rape kit backlog; creating programs and policies for more effective law enforcement responses to domestic violence; changing consent laws; adding stipulations to Title IX education policies that would protect those experiencing harassment or violence; changing the statutes of limitation; and creating labor policies that protect people from violence and allow them to safely report sexual abuse and violence. Organizations involved in these arenas include the National Women’s Law

Center, Raliance, RAINN, the Joyful Heart Foundation and the Institute for Women’s Policy Research.

The Biden-Harris administration has worked with foundations and nonprofits in this area as well. The administration released a National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence in 2023. Several philanthropies [contributed policy recommendations](#), including Blue Shield of California Foundation, ValorUS, Futures Without Violence, and the National Network to End Domestic Violence.

**Narrative Change and Reimagining Public Safety.** Programs and research aimed at changing culture and narratives surrounding violence are emerging as major funder strategies. Within restorative justice organizations, this entails rethinking “justice reform” as an issue of community safety rather than criminalization. For organizations working on interpersonal violence, there are growing efforts to understand and dismantle the [pervasive culture of toxic masculinity](#). In the gun violence space, there are efforts to recast gun violence as a public health problem rather than focusing so much on the legal system or the narrative that gun violence is primarily about bad people doing bad things.

Funders are beginning to recognize the importance of backing research that informs cultural change work surrounding toxic masculinity and prescribed gender roles. For example, the Culture Change Fund, which started up in 2019 as a project of the California Gender Justice Funders Network, [launched](#) with \$10 million in seed funding from The California Endowment, the Women’s Foundation of

### Campaign Spotlight



The Women’s Foundation of Minnesota launched its MN Girls Are Not For Sale in 2011. The overarching goal of the eight-year, \$8 million program was to end sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of youth in Minnesota. Though the campaign ended in 2019, it resulted in the creation of a \$47 million fund complete with a comprehensive state wide plan dedicated to ending sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of all Minnesota youth.

California, Blue Shield of California Foundation and others. One of the projects backed by this new collaborative is Story at Scale, which shares the stories of people who experience gender-based violence and discrimination. Story at Scale also released a [report](#) that explores past research about gender stereotypes and connects these stereotypes to violence and negative attitudes toward people of particular racial and gender identities.



*“Funders need to embrace the reality that violence exists on a continuum, and it is deeply rooted in issues of race, economic inequality, community health, education, class, gender and more. We cannot and should not think of suicide, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of all gun deaths, as one problem, and homicide as something completely different.”*

—David Brotherton, founder and president, Brotherton Strategies; philanthropy advisor

One organization attracting funder attention is A Call to Men, which develops training and education programs to combat the toxic patriarchy and its violent effects. The New York Women’s Foundation is a major funder. In a 2017 interview with *Inside Philanthropy*, the New York Women’s Foundation president, Ana Oliveira, said that U.S. culture focuses on penalizing individual men for violence, all while the root causes of this violence remain in place. “The culture at large has condoned these

individual behaviors,” Oliveira said. “Not only condoned, but enabled... We wanted to extinguish that behavior, and that meant funding not only the transformation of women, but also the transformation of men.”

In the area of gun violence, an example of culture change work is the Hope and Heal Fund’s collaboration with Berkeley Media Studios to change the narrative around gun violence to focus less on mass shootings and more on the everyday gun violence—including domestic violence, suicide and community violence—that affects communities. [Research](#) produced by this partnership found that media coverage of gun violence is focused on mass shootings and largely ignores domestic violence and suicide deaths. This creates a reductionist cultural narrative where gun violence is mostly about extreme cases involving evil actors, rather than a complex, community-level problem that can be solved with community-based solutions.

“Funders need to embrace the reality that violence exists on a continuum, and it is deeply rooted in issues of race, economic inequality, community health, education, class, gender and more,” says Brotherton. “We cannot and should not think of suicide, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of all gun deaths, as one problem, and homicide as something completely different.”

## Perspectives on Equity

Equity issues are inextricable from violence prevention work, where racial equity, gender equity, LGBTQ+ equity, economic equity—and the intersections thereof—are paramount. Violence, in many ways, is about the manifestations of power dynamics, and

populations that are vulnerable or under-resourced are more likely to suffer from violence in their lives and communities.

Many of the well-known statistics fall along the binary gender divide: [1 in 6 women](#) has been the victim of a rape or an attempted rape in their lifetime, as compared to 1 in 33 men, according to the CDC. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, [1 in 7 women](#) are severely injured by intimate partners in their lifetime, and 55% of female murder victims are [killed](#) by their current or former intimate partner. Intimate partner violence spiked during the COVID-19 lockdowns, with a jump in domestic violence cases from 25% to 33% globally. The U.N. declared intimate partner violence a “shadow pandemic.” Despite this, a U.N. report showed that a meager 0.0002% of COVID-19 donor support went toward ending gender-based violence.

Several demographic groups experience high rates of violence. According to RAINN, Native American women are at [substantially higher risk](#) of sexual violence than any other racial group. Black women are [three times](#) more likely and American Indian/Alaskan Native women four times more likely to be shot by their partners compared to white women. More than 2 in 5 Black women have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Four in 10 homicides against Latinx women are a result of gender-based violence by an intimate partner. Sexual violence against migrant women is severely underreported due to fear of the police.

LGBTQ+ people are more likely to be victimized by multiple forms of violence, and Black trans

people—standing at the intersection of multiple histories of discrimination and marginalization—are among the most likely demographic to experience violence. Across demographic groups, differences in age and income are also key predictors of violence; young men are substantially more likely to commit violence, as are people living in poverty.

Outside the realm of interpersonal violence, the [majority of murders](#) and violent crimes—sometimes called “youth violence”—are committed by young men, and young men are the victims. Black men are 17 times more likely to die by gun violence than white men. Homicide rates among Black Americans continue to grow at a higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group. [Data compiled in 2023](#) by Everytown Research showed an alarming increase in gun homicides in the Latinx community.

Suicide death rates are also highly variable by gender, racial/ethnic group, and socioeconomic factors. Nearly two-thirds of gun violence deaths are suicide deaths. According to the CDC, suicide rates are highest among “American Indian and Alaska Native people, males, and people who live in rural areas.” Across the board, an increase in gun suicides is driving overall suicide rates to record levels. Data from 2022 shows the highest number of firearm-related suicides on record. [A recent analysis by KFF](#) specifies that “the availability of guns (measured indirectly by the number of gun laws in a state) is [linked to firearm suicide rates](#) - with states with fewer gun laws having higher rates. [Suicide deaths](#) accounted for more than half (55%) of all deaths involving a firearm in 2021.”

There are many ways to slice the data, but what's clear is that marginalization and lack of access to economic, health and educational resources creates circumstances where violence is more likely to take root, thrive and repeat from one generation to the next. After decades of failure to solve the problem through criminalization and incarceration, people working in violence prevention are increasingly centering the ideas and solutions of the people most impacted, and working within communities, rather than the legal systems, to create solutions.

“Our main response to rape and sexual violence is putting men behind bars to be raped,” says Nicole

Pittman at the Just Beginnings Collaborative.

“You can't end violence with violence. We believe we have to go back to the community to resolve these issues. We're also trying to get away from looking at Black and brown communities as 'more likely to,' meaning, 'more likely to be incarcerated, more likely to die of heart disease,' and moving to, instead, 'more likely to be closer to the problems and closer to the solutions.'

Imagine following the lead of a people to solve an issue... it is such a different journey when their survival depends on it.”

Many of the newer restorative justice and healing justice programs focus on survivor-led and BIPOC-led solutions. Organizations like Survivors' Agenda, #metoo.International, Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women, and Black Women's Blueprint are centering the solutions and leadership of BIPOC survivors of violence. These tend to focus holistically on community health and safety, and less on punitive measures.

Breaking down the historical narratives around violence and the emphasis on punishing a villainous perpetrator has become core to many constituent-led initiatives. The Collective Future Fund (CFF), for example, is a newer grantmaking collaborative with origins in the #MeToo movement. Its initial mandate to prevent sexual violence quickly evolved into an intersectional philosophy. CFF gives grants to organizations—such as the Fund for Trans Generations or Justice for Migrant Women—that are not only “violence prevention” organizations, but approach the problem of community safety holistically. “We recognize the interwoven nature of the issues

## Sunsetting Spotlight



For many years, the Kendeda Fund was one of the only funders in the U.S. with a grantmaking portfolio devoted to gun violence prevention, becoming a leader in the field.

Kendeda was founded in 1993 by Diana Blank, the former spouse of Home Depot co-founder Arthur Blank. Visionary and devoted philanthropists, Blank and her daughter Dena Kimball transformed Kendeda into a spend-down foundation with a planned sunseting that occurred in 2023. In its three decades of operation, Kendeda granted over \$1 billion to a range of causes.

that impact safety and liberation work, and do not separate grantee partners into programmatic areas or reductive silos,” CFF states on its website.

According to Pittman, there is an incorrect and culturally corrosive assumption that if perpetrators of violence or abuse are punished, the problem is solved. This allows people to overlook the violent cultures and histories embedded in communities and institutions.

“There’s such a tendency to think about bad actors and the binary of victim and perpetrator,” says Seth Stewart, formerly the deputy director at the Just Beginnings Collaborative. “The MeToo movement became connected to the entertainment industry and particular figures... so it becomes constrained to a specific set of circumstances, and not an issue that we all have to reckon with. But this is deeper and more multifaceted than these particular people or that particular situation.”

According to Stewart, violence prevention programs and organizations struggle to attract funding in part because funders fail to adapt an intersectional mindset and recognize that specific forms of violence and abuse are connected to larger community conditions. When funders recognize these connections, violence prevention organizations tend to benefit.

Indeed, violence prevention programs and organizations have recently benefited from the newer pooled funds targeting racial equity issues. Examples of these funds include Grantmakers for Girls of Color and its Black Girl Freedom Fund, the Collaborative for Gender and

Reproductive Equity, California Funders of Boys and Men of Color, and the Black Freedom Fund. These funds, with their broad racial equity mandates, have become an interesting route for violence prevention funding.

The Blue Shield of California Foundation, for example, granted \$3 million to the Black Freedom Fund to develop domestic violence prevention programs. The initial round of grants from the fund focused on organizations – including the F.I.N.D. Design, Healing the Black Body, and The Hive Community Circle—that practice forms of trauma-informed healing, healing justice and alternatives to the juvenile justice system.

## Funder Spotlight

blue  of california  
foundation

According to the Blue Shield of California Foundation, 58% of Californians have been impacted by domestic violence. The foundation’s Break the Cycle of Domestic Violence program aims to break multigenerational cycles of violence by supporting efforts addressing its root causes. Recent grantees include ValorUS, which received funding for its work combating sexual violence; and Homeboy Industries, which received a grant for its restorative justice and domestic violence prevention programs.

# A Closer Look at Funder Types

## Private Foundations

The largest private foundations in violence prevention include the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Schusterman Family Philanthropies, Ford Foundation, Joyce Foundation, Open Society Foundations, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Arnold Ventures—previously known as the Laura and John Arnold Foundation—is a major justice reform and gun violence prevention grantor that became an LLC in 2019, along with changing its name.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has granted hundreds of millions to violence prevention efforts via its [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), which works within local legal systems to implement programs that reduce mass incarceration. Many of these grants fall within the justice reform umbrella rather than violence prevention more specifically—but a significant portion of these grants are for local entities (whether the sheriff’s office, a parole board or a local university) to implement alternatives to incarceration, such as mental health services, that seek to reduce violence via prevention. Some of the MacArthur grants also target state violence via police reform. Additionally, MacArthur funds gun violence prevention in Chicago, where it is headquartered.

Ford Foundation makes violence prevention grants through its Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Justice program. Ford supports organizations,

such as Dignity and Power Now, Common Justice, and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, which implement restorative justice programs. Notably, Ford is one of the only foundations that houses its gender justice and criminal justice reform work within the same larger umbrella. The “gender” portion targets gender-based violence internationally. Within the U.S., Ford’s gender grants support reproductive justice and immigrants’ rights and justice. While there is overlap there with violence prevention, it is not the core focus.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a long-standing child welfare funder that funds a variety of violence prevention efforts via its juvenile justice, child welfare, community change, and equity and inclusion programming areas. The Public Welfare Foundation, like Casey, is another long-standing funder of violence prevention efforts focused on youth.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is not typically thought of as an anti-violence funder, but it funds an interesting assortment of nonprofits working on violence prevention from different standpoints. The foundation’s three stated funding priorities of thriving children, working families, and equitable communities fit with the philanthropic sector’s larger desire to focus more on the root causes of violence by funding communities. Violence prevention organizations recently supported by Kellogg include Futures Without Violence and the Center for Children’s Law and Policy.

A handful of foundations have become reliable gun violence prevention funders. These include the Joyce Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson

Foundation, the California Wellness Foundation, the David Bohnett Foundation, and the Lefkowsky Family Foundation.

Until recently, NoVo Foundation was the largest violence prevention funder with a focus on violence against women and girls worldwide and in the U.S. In May 2020, an email and subsequent blog post from Peter Buffett indicated, in [vague terms](#), NoVo's intent to shift focus and ramp down funding to current recipients. In the years since it has become evident that NoVo will not be substantially resuming its violence prevention work.

"We wouldn't want to be in that situation again, where we're relying on just one funder," Nicole Pittman, executive director at the Just Beginnings Collaborative (JBC), said in an

interview for this brief. JBS was launched in 2015 as a NoVo Foundation project to end child sexual abuse. Today, JBS defines itself as an activist fund "led by and meant for survivors developing strategies to end child sexual abuse that simultaneously address community and state violence."

The real problem with NoVo's pullout, Pittman says, wasn't so much NoVo's decision itself, but the larger failure within philanthropy to diversify its approaches to violence prevention and to attract more funders to the issues. "And that's a big reason for the new pooled funds," Pittman says.

## Corporate Funders

For many years, only a few corporate foundations had been reliable funders of domestic violence and interpersonal violence prevention and survivor services. In the other violence prevention categories of community violence, alternatives to incarceration and gun violence prevention, corporate funders have historically shied away. This has changed in recent years as a wide swathe of racial justice issues attracted corporate giving.

Since 2005, The Allstate Foundation has [funded](#) programs to break the cycle of relationship abuse and financial abuse by helping survivors take control of their finances. To date, the foundation has raised over \$90 million. The Mary Kay Ash Foundation (formerly known as the Marky Kay Foundation) has [likewise](#) been a major domestic violence prevention funder since 2000, when this became one of the foundation's two focus areas (the other is cancer research). Every year, the

### Funder Spotlight



The Mary Kay Ash Foundation's Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence program has awarded more than \$58 million in grants supporting 3,300 organizations since 2000. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the foundation awarded emergency grants to 54 shelters around the country. Though human trafficking is not a stated program for the foundation, it has supported Polaris, an organization fighting sex and labor trafficking worldwide.

foundation grants \$3 million to domestic violence shelters across the country. The Avon Foundation has been an active funder of both domestic and sexual violence prevention (collectively known as intimate partner violence) since 2004. In 2013, Avon granted \$38 million to U.S. organizations fighting domestic violence. Its website currently places its [total](#) funding for gender-based violence both domestically and internationally at \$80 million. Other corporations that have donated to interpersonal violence causes include Uber, JPMorgan Chase and Purina.

The Blue Shield of California Foundation has focused on ending the cycle of domestic violence since its founding in 2010. It grants millions each year to this cause. Blue Shield has become a leader in the area of interpersonal violence prevention as it embraces a whole-health, public health, and community change approach. It is also working to build collaborations and partnerships to leverage more funding for this under-resourced area of philanthropy, working with other California funders including the Sierra Health Foundation and the California Wellness Foundation.

On the heels of the #MeToo movement in 2017 and 2018, some new corporate funders came to the table in the area of sexual violence—although corporate support in this area is still quite minuscule. In 2019, CBS and the Conrad Hilton Foundation [signed on](#) as [contributors](#) to the Collaborative Fund for Women’s Safety and Dignity, today known as the Collective Future Fund. CBS has also supported the Fund for the Me Too Movement and Allies. In 2016, the NFL [provided](#) \$10 million in seed funding to

RALIANCE, a nonprofit dedicated to ending sexual violence in one generation.

Corporate support for gun violence prevention has been spotty at best, although a [handful](#) of corporate contributors including Google, the Motorola Solutions Foundations and Levi Strauss and Company have donated to the cause. As mentioned in the Who’s Giving section, Microsoft is the only corporate partner among 13 private philanthropic funders involved in the Biden administration’s anti-violence collaborative, which was active in 2021 and 2022. Microsoft and Walmart are the only two corporate funders of the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network, also supported by the Vera Institute of Justice and the National Network for Safe Communities.

Like Microsoft, a few other corporations contribute to violence prevention nonprofits as part of their larger justice reform initiatives. Google has given tens of millions to justice reform organizations since 2017, and it expanded its commitments in 2020—though only a small fraction of Google’s commitments have gone to violence prevention efforts. In 2020, Warner Music Group announced a \$100 million [partnership](#) with the Blavatnik Family Foundation to fund social justice groups, including community safety and violence prevention groups.

Disney has been a long-time supporter of Sandy Hook Promise, a gun violence prevention organization. Sandy Hook’s work focuses on gun legislation as well as youth education, mental health, and bullying prevention. According to

Inside Philanthropy reportage by Susan Barnett, Sandy Hook has seen year-over-year revenue increases thanks to sustained support by long-time donors combined with new donors coming to the table after the latest mass casualty event. “Though gun reform is seen as an unwinnable issue by many funders, Sandy Hook Promise seems to have overcome that challenge with its holistic approach to reducing gun violence,” Barnett wrote.

Since 2017, the [NFL has granted](#) more than \$160 million to social justice groups via its Inspire Change initiative. Justice reform and police-community relations are two of the initiative's four focus areas, and violence prevention efforts more specifically have received some funding. This includes a 2021 grant to the Communities Partnering for Peace violence prevention program, housed at Metropolitan Family Services in Chicago.

## Community Foundations

Community foundations are among the most important violence prevention funders, particularly in the areas of interpersonal and sexual violence, and increasingly for gun violence prevention as well. These geographically and demographically focused foundations have been the core source of philanthropic support for decades. They have now become the instigators and organizers behind efforts to create new funding collaboratives and networks with national foundations, corporations and individual donors.

Local community foundations are key funders for local domestic violence shelters, programs for at-risk youth, services for survivors of sexual

violence, and services for children who are victims of abuse. In most communities, the majority of funding for direct services programming comes from the government, so local foundations often provide additional support for organizations that rely primarily on government grants. In North Carolina, for example, the [North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) receives 90% of its funding from government contracts, both state and federal, 5% from foundation grants and 5% from individuals. This breakdown is typical of interpersonal violence organizations, although some rely more heavily on foundation grants.

### Nonprofit Spotlight



Sandy Hook Promise was founded in 2013 by family members whose loved ones were killed in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School. The organization is known for supporting gun violence prevention research, its bipartisan approach to legal and legislative change, and its in-school empathy and anti-bullying programs, including “Start With Hello” and “Say Something.” Sandy Hook Promise’s revenues have steadily increased, from \$3.5 million in 2016 to \$31 million in 2023. It continues to play an important role in the broadening coalition of gun violence prevention organizations nationwide.

Examples of community and women’s foundations active in interpersonal violence prevention and services for victims include the Ms. Foundation, the Chicago Foundation for Women, the New York Women’s Foundation, the Women’s Foundation of California and the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota, among many others. These women’s foundations are often key funders or organizers behind collaborative funds or advocacy campaigns and are oftentimes the only funding sources for the under-resourced issues of interpersonal and sexual violence.

The New York Women’s Foundation, for example, was behind the Fund for the Me Too Movement and Allies—which, unfortunately, appears to be one of the only sustained philanthropic funding efforts to result from the giving spree inspired by the #MeToo movement. In Minnesota, the women’s foundation launched an eight-year, \$8 million campaign to end sex trafficking in the state. In California, the women’s foundation helped pass a bill extending public benefits to victims of sex trafficking and domestic violence.

The Philadelphia Foundation, the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, the Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina, and many other local foundations across the U.S., are fighting the largely uncontrolled epidemic of interpersonal violence. A 2019 Women’s Philanthropy Institute [study](#) of women’s foundations and funds found that grantmaking to so-called “women’s issues” like domestic violence and sexual assault can be difficult to track because funds are often small and housed within larger community foundations.

Community foundations are likewise heavily involved in gun violence, community violence, restorative justice and police violence, including the Chicago Community Trust and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. For gun violence prevention specifically, smaller community foundations play a pivotal role in leveraging the emerging public-private partnerships enabled by Biden-Harris administration funding for gun violence prevention. Community foundations can help connect local community-based organizations (CBOs) with public officials and provide training and resources to both.

## Major Donors

Individual donors have become major players in violence prevention philanthropy. Newer LLCs headed by living donors are funding violence prevention programs, often via larger criminal justice reform portfolios. These LLCs, along with mega-gifts from MacKenzie Scott, have become significant, even transformational, sources of funding for violence prevention organizations.

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, an LLC piloted by Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg and his spouse Priscilla Chan, launched its criminal justice reform program in 2017. In 2021, CZI announced a commitment of **\$350 million** over five years to a spinoff organization, The Just Trust. Violence prevention is a major focus at The Just Trust, including via its Safer Communities Accelerator program. Grantees include smaller, state-based programs like LiveFreeOKC and Operation Good in Jackson, Mississippi. National grantees include the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP), Cure Violence, and Youth Advocate Programs (YAP).

The philanthropist MacKenzie Scott included a number of violence prevention organizations in her initial round of mega-grants, which were announced in July 2020. She followed this up with additional major contributions to violence prevention organizations in 2024 via her new giving vehicle, Yield Giving. Supported organizations include A Call to Men, Collective Future Fund, Futures Without Violence, GLSEN, National Women’s Law Center, Faith in Action, RAINN, the Clean Slate Initiative, Girls First Fund, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Advocates for Children, Impact Justice, and Common Justice.

Open Philanthropy, funded by Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz and his wife Cari

Tuna, is another LLC that supports violence prevention work via its justice reform spinoff organization, Just Impact Advisors. Grantees include the Ahimsa Collective, Alliance for Safety and Justice, the Community Based Public Safety Collective, and Life Comes From It.

Hedge fund billionaires Laura and John Arnold support violence prevention via Arnold Ventures, their LLC. As with many other funders, Arnold houses violence prevention work within its criminal justice reform portfolio. Their [policing portfolio](#), which has disbursed \$72 million to date, includes five subtopics, all of which are violence prevention strategies: crisis response, gun violence research, police accountability, violence reduction and community safety.

Instagram co-founder Mike Kreiger and his wife Kaitlyn [have focused](#) their giving primarily on criminal justice reform. They are co-founders of the [Future Justice Fund](#), which includes restorative justice and “meeting the needs of crime survivors” among its core priorities. Another major violence prevention funder is the Emerson Collective, the grantmaking vehicle of billionaire philanthropist Laurene Powell Jobs. Emerson is the funder behind Chicago CRED, a gun violence prevention organization that operates programs serving young men at the highest risk of gun violence. CRED also provides grants to partner organizations and is the hub of the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities, currently the best-resourced effort in the U.S. to prevent gun violence in a major city.

### Funder Spotlight



The Collective Future Fund (CFF) is a philanthropic intermediary fund “that brings together social justice movements, survivors, and donors to heal, resource, and mobilize toward a future free from violence.” Between 2020 and 2024, CFF supported grants totaling \$27 million to 112 grantee partners. CFF’s focus is grassroots, frontline organizations in the anti-violence movement. CFF is an influential organization, working to facilitate dialogue among anti-violence funders and organizations.

Michael Bloomberg has spent at least **\$270 million** on gun violence prevention efforts (which includes both political and philanthropic contributions). Bloomberg's work in this area began when he was mayor and expanded in later years via Bloomberg Philanthropies and other giving vehicles. Everytown for Gun Safety was seeded by Bloomberg in 2013 and was a conjoining of Mayors Against Illegal Guns (which Bloomberg helped create as New York mayor) and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a grassroots group founded by Shannon Watts, a mom in Indianapolis, the day after the Sandy Hook shooting.

Bloomberg's approach to gun violence has been decidedly political; he funds candidates who support gun control and advocacy efforts targeting specific legislation. Everytown for Gun Safety **spent \$30 million** on the 2018 midterm elections, **\$60 million** on the 2020 election, and **\$20 million** on the 2022 election. Moms Demand Action has registered hundreds of thousands of voters. In part as a result of these efforts, dozens of representatives who ran on a gun violence prevention platform were elected at the state level in 2018, 2020, and 2022, as well as a handful elected at the federal level. In general, violence prevention organizations increasingly see get-out-the-vote efforts and electoral politics as a means to achieve legislative and policy goals that have been hampered by decades-long stalemates.

Ballmer Group is another billionaire-funded LLC making big waves as a newer violence prevention funder. Funded by former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer and his spouse Connie, Ballmer Group is one of the fastest-growing philanthropies in the U.S., and much of the Ballmers' growing

philanthropic commitments are in the violence prevention space. What's notable is the huge size of the grants, which tend to be for multi-year, unrestricted operating support. Recent grantees include the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention, Chicago CRED, Cities United, and the Urban Peace Institute.

## Research Spotlight



Established in 2019, the Duke Center for Firearms Law works on advancing the field of non-partisan scholarship on firearms law and serving as a reliable scholarly resource for key stakeholders such as judges, policymakers, and citizens. The center "is devoted to the development and dissemination of reliable and balanced scholarship on issues surrounding firearms, gun rights and regulation, and the Second Amendment."

Melinda French Gates is an emerging violence prevention funder. While her work at the Gates Foundation focused on gender equity at a global level, violence prevention in the U.S. was never a key priority. Now that French Gates has left the Gates Foundation and will conduct the majority of her philanthropy via Pivotal Ventures, her LLC, it appears that women's issues in the U.S., ranging from reproductive justice to health and safety, will be a major priority.

Donations from celebrities to gun control nonprofits spiked after the Parkland shooting in 2018 and the Uvalde massacre in 2022. These included a \$500,000 contribution to March for Our Lives from George and Amal Clooney, as well as [donations](#) from Oprah Winfrey, Matthew McConaughey, Steven Spielberg and producer Jeffrey Katzenberg. In 2020, the connections between domestic violence and the COVID-19 pandemic drew celebrity donations to domestic violence shelters, including \$2.1 million apiece from pop star Rihanna and Twitter and Square CEO Jack Dorsey to support domestic violence victims in Los Angeles.

## Associations and Intermediaries

Funding intermediaries, collaborative funds and funding networks are fundamentally important for violence prevention philanthropy. Their importance has grown substantially in recent years. Collaborative funds are now seen as a potential long-term solution to the persistent funding shortfalls experienced by funders and nonprofits in the violence prevention space.

In the area of gun violence prevention, collaborative and pooled funds include the Fund for a Safer Future (a New Venture Fund project), which has [granted \\$25 million](#) and “leveraged \$300 million in aligned grantmaking by its more than 30 members.” Members include the Joyce Foundation, Langeloth Foundation, Jed Foundation, Thompson Family Foundation, and Morningstar Foundation. The Hope and Heal Fund (another New Venture Fund project) is a [collaboration](#) of California [funders](#) that promotes a “public health, racial equity, and community-based approach to preventing gun violence in California.” Partners include the

California Endowment, the Weingart Foundation and the Lisa and John Pritzker Family Fund, among others. Despite investments from an impressive array of funders, the Hope and Heal Fund, at the time of the writing of this brief, [has disbursed](#) a modest \$1 million since its founding in 2016.

Key networks and partnerships that support multi-funder collaborations or provide knowledge and infrastructure to organizations involved in gun violence prevention work include: the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention, the National Alliance for Suicide Prevention, the Partnership for Safety and Justice in Oregon, the Black and Brown Gun Violence Consortium, and the March For Our Lives. The Community Justice Action Fund, a project of Tides, is a key entity that coordinates organizing and communication strategies for gun violence prevention organizations. Similarly, the Justice Collaborative is another Tides project that provides infrastructure and expertise to organizations that support “a safer and more just America.”

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, Borealis Philanthropy, and the National Network to End Domestic Violence are other key associations and intermediaries.

The Chicago-based Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities, which launched in 2016, is one of the larger funding collaboratives, and today consists of about 50 funders. The fund has disbursed about \$140 million to date. Another newer collaborative, the National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research, launched in 2018 with a \$20 million gift from Arnold Ventures.

Since then, other funders including Wells Fargo Bank, Missouri Foundation for Health and the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation have joined the collaborative, which funds gun violence research. As detailed elsewhere in this report, gun violence research was previously restricted by a stipulation under the 1996 Dickey Amendment. Since this was effectively retracted in 2018, funding for gun violence prevention research has been vitally important. This new collaborative is resourcing a field that needs a lot of new support.

### Coalition Spotlight

## **SURVIVORS' AGENDA**

Survivors' Agenda is a collective of organizations that “believe that survivors should be the ones shaping the national conversation on sexual violence.” The agenda itself is a community-driven guide focusing on survivor justice and preventing and interrupting sexual violence. Funding for the collective is provided by the Collective Future Fund, Ms. Foundation for Women, and the Levi Strauss Foundation. Community partners include a wide array of organizations such as A Long Walk Home, Sex Workers Organizing Project, PERIOD, Hollaback!. Inc., and many more.

Research funded by the National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research includes a Stanford University study of the risks associated with handguns in the home. “This study aims to produce robust estimates of the ‘secondhand’ risks and benefits of firearm ownership, which will support more informed decision-making by policymakers and by current and prospective gun owners,” said Asheley Van Ness, formerly the director of criminal justice at Arnold Ventures, in an interview for this report.

In the area of interpersonal and sexual violence, funding collaboratives include the Just Beginnings Collaborative, the Family and Interpersonal Resilience and Safety Transformation Fund (FIRST Fund), the Collective Future Fund, the Culture Change Fund, the Sexual Violence Prevention Collaborative of Fairfield County, and the Fund for the Me Too Movement and Allies. Aside from these pooled funds, there are several networks and movement-supporting organizations that encourage funding collaboratives and coalitions. These include A Call to Men, the Healing Together Campaign, the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, the National Coalition to End Domestic Violence and the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, among others.

As discussed above in the Equity section, a number of racial equity funder collaboratives, such as the Black Girl Freedom Fund and the NYC Fund for Women and Girls of Color, are giving grants to violence prevention organizations.

# An Analysis of Opportunities & Challenges

In the research and interviews for this brief, one theme emerged time and again as the primary opportunity within the violence prevention field: the shift from a punitive mindset to a prevention mindset. Funders, community-based organizations, and even public officials are pivoting to address the root causes of violence, disrupt the cycle of intergenerational violence, and prevent violence by supporting healthy communities. With this shift comes a panoply of challenges, including field-building, funding research and pilot programs, and balancing a prevention mindset with the ongoing need for punitive measures and survivor services.

From a fundraising standpoint, it can be challenging to attract grants for prevention programs because outcomes can't be measured in the format preferred by funders. According to Seth Stewart, formerly at the Just Beginnings Collaborative, funders typically want to support programs that are scalable or cross-applicable. Yet community-centered prevention strategies are more about working within and empowering specific communities.

"This way of working might not be amenable to a grant report or a splashy statement of 'we have helped 20,000 children,'" Stewart said. "We are not living in the world of statistics or large numbers, because we're looking at how to prevent or interrupt abuse, not instances of harm. It is harder to measure something that does not happen. But that really has to be the mental 180 that the philanthropic spaces need to understand."

This sentiment was echoed by Ted Bunch, co-founder of A Call to Men, in a 2017 [Inside Philanthropy article](#). A Call to Men is one of the few major nonprofits taking on violence by confronting cultural and socialization issues. Bunch said it can be difficult to make the case for funding when success can't be tracked with the metrics that many funders prefer. "If you run a shelter for domestic violence and you have 20 beds, but 30 women who need your services, you can easily quantify and justify the cost of 10 more beds," Bunch said. "With prevention, it's harder to measure your need and impact."

An adjacent challenge—also voiced by many working in violence prevention—is getting funders to look at violence holistically rather than within topical silos. "As we look at prevention, we are trying to take domestic violence out of the silo it's been in," said Peña at the Blue Shield of California Foundation. "If you are a homelessness prevention funder, you will not achieve your mission if domestic violence is invisible to your analysis. You just won't achieve it."

The problem of silos isn't only one for funders; nonprofits tend to silo forms of violence into the binaries of interpersonal violence (which includes sexual and domestic violence) and community violence (street violence, gang violence or youth violence). It's typical for programming — particularly for at-risk youth or survivors — to focus on one or the other, but in reality, the distinctions are less clear. Violence perpetrators might be abusing someone at home

while also involved in street violence, and they themselves might be victims of violence or child abuse.

“One of the ‘ah-ha!’ moments we had was about mass shootings, and if you look at the person who perpetrated that shooting, in most cases, you’ll find some form of domestic violence,” says Peña. She says that gun violence prevention organizations often recognize the connection to domestic violence, but that connection isn’t explored deeply and integrated into on-the-ground strategies.

“Domestic violence is a public issue,” Peña says. “When you have folks who have been involved with domestic violence and it plays out later in gang violence or youth violence... the solution to these issues can’t ignore domestic violence.”

According to Peña, the converse is also true: strategies used to address street violence might be effective for intimate partner violence

prevention. Restorative justice is a proven strategy for youth involved in street violence, but hasn’t been much explored in other contexts. “So that’s why we’re testing whether restorative justice principles and practices can be adapted to address [interpersonal] harm, healing and accountability,” Peña says, “and to limit the systemic interactions, including law enforcement and child welfare programs, the punishment-oriented systems that can impact a family for many years.” To this end, Blue Shield is funding a restorative justice pilot program at the Contra Costa Family Justice Center.

Violence prevention organizations are grappling with the extent to which law enforcement and other public entities can be effective partners in adopting prevention-oriented and trauma-centered approaches to violence. There have been a number of local successes to this end, as well as widespread challenges, failures and growing pains.

## Initiative Spotlight

**URBAN  
JUSTICE  
CENTER**

Sex Workers  
Project

Although a reported 45-75% of sex workers experience violence at work, it is an area of crime and violence prevention philanthropy that remains critically underfunded. The Sex Workers Project, an initiative of the Urban Justice Center, provides free immigration legal and social services to people ages 18 and older who are current sex workers, profiled as sex workers and those who are survivors of human trafficking. It is the only organization in the U.S. addressing the needs of these groups. Supporters of the project include NEO Philanthropy, New York Women’s Foundation, Reflex Media and the NYC Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice.

“Federal funding to address domestic, sexual and interpersonal violence still heavily relies on training, equipping and relying on law enforcement,” said Brook Kelly-Green, the senior director of gender and reproductive equity at Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies. “The philanthropic community is starting to embrace alternate funding opportunities like healing circles and addressing the root causes of violence, such as economic inequity, generational trauma and lack of opportunity.”

There is an ongoing question regarding the extent that governmental funders and public entities will adapt the prevention-oriented approach that is increasingly preferred by the private sector. One promising prevention-oriented lens appreciated by philanthropic and governmental organizations alike is approaching the problem of violence with a public health lens.

In [an interview](#) with Inside Philanthropy, Ana Oliveira, the president and CEO of the New York Women’s Foundation, said that the public health approach is key to solving the problem of domestic violence. This approach treats the toxic patriarchy as an upstream cultural variable that contributes to the problem of interpersonal violence. “If you look at public health approaches, they have been very effective at dealing with perceived entrenched issues,” Oliveira says. “They have changed human behavior in an exceptional manner. They have changed smoking. They have changed seatbelts.”

Public-private partnerships in violence prevention are becoming a lot more common, and this syncs well with a public health

orientation. Health officials both at the national level (the NIH or the CDC) and the local level (state or city public health departments) can partner with philanthropies and nonprofits with expertise in violence prevention. These types of partnerships have been hugely bolstered by Biden-Harris administration funding for violence prevention. This has included \$350 million earmarked for community violence intervention (CVI) programs in the American Rescue Plan and \$250 million for CVI programs in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in 2022, the first major gun violence prevention legislation in decades.

The Biden-Harris administration also funded and launched a federal Office of Gun Violence Prevention in 2023. This office is collaborating with state- and city-level Offices of Violence Prevention, now part of the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network, which launched in 2021 as the result of a philanthropic partnership involving the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, Advance Peace, the Center for American Progress, and the Vera Institute of Justice.

At the local level, these Offices of Violence Prevention (OVPs) are administered by public entities, such as public health departments, that collaborate with funders and community organizations. As an example, the [OVP in Los Angeles](#), California is housed within the Department of Public Health. Some of its work has been supported by private funders including the Blue Shield of California Foundation, the California Wellness Foundation, and the Hope and Health Fund. These novel public-private collaborations are in their infancy. What’s

already clear is that increased public funding at the federal level is enabling research and initiatives that benefit communities across the U.S. In the years to come, philanthropy can play an invaluable role as an intermediary and field-builder, connecting public offices with nonprofits and community-based organizations.

According to Jen Keeling at Chicago CRED, the newer public health orientation is pushing organizations to remove gun violence from its topical silo by connecting the gun violence epidemic with interrelating risk factors – as is the case with preventing a physical disease. “The

lens we put on the work is treating gun violence as a public health issue,” Keeling says. “We have to take a much more holistic approach than previously. CRED’s programming is all about violence prevention, but if they [program participants] need mental health services, we provide that. If they need education, we help them with that. If they need housing assistance, we help with that. So it’s really about addressing the needs of a person holistically, so they are in a place where they can pick a different option than selling drugs or picking up a gun.”

Keeling adds that such holistic approaches to violence reduction are newer. Many organizations are building programs from scratch as an alternative to the criminal legal system as the default solution to violence. With that in mind, people in the violence prevention field are concerned that setbacks—such as the increase in the violent crime rate during the COVID pandemic—will discourage the philanthropic sector from continuing to fund proven strategies.

Keeling says that it’s important for the philanthropic sector to continue to fund programs that are promising, yet might not have that immediate impact. “With violence work in particular, we in philanthropy who are involved with rebuilding and reinvesting need to be patient enough to realize that we shouldn’t expect things to change in three or five years, where it took 50 to get things to where they are [in the criminal justice system]. We will change strategies and expand along the way, but if violence has not gone down within two years, the solution is not to disinvest.”

## Violence Prevention Spotlight

### **A CALL TO MEN**

The Next Generation of Manhood

A Call to Men describes its vision as wanting to help “create a world where all men and boys are loving and respectful and all women, girls, and those at the margins of the margins are valued and safe.” The organization has trained over 1 million people to help address the root problems of sexual assault and gender based violence and discrimination. It has also worked with a number of private and government organizations to forward its mission including the U.S. Military, the NFL, J.P. Morgan, and multiple colleges and universities.

# Key Resources & Recommended Reading

## Articles & Reports:

Albilal, N., Eyega, Z., Fischer, J., Guzman, M., Hamza, Y., & Mehra, K. (March 28, 2023). [Philanthropy is Dropping the Ball on Gender Justice. Here's What Needs to Change.](#) Inside Philanthropy.

Burd-Sharps, S., Fingar, K., & Rozario, T. (September 29, 2023). [Two Decades of Suicide Prevention Laws: Lessons from National Leaders in Gun Safety Policy.](#) Everytown for Gun Safety.

Crary, D. (March 14, 2019). [Donors Team Up to Expand #MeToo's Impact in the Workplace.](#) AP News

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## Feedback?

The State of American Philanthropy is an ongoing project, each SAP brief will be updated periodically to integrate new information, additional data and evolving perspectives. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at [managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.com](mailto:managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.com).