



## 2024 Worcester Youth Violence Assessment

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## Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative Background

The WYVPI formed in response to a gang and youth violence assessment and citywide strategic planning process that engaged hundreds of youth, adult residents, and other stakeholders from fall 2013 through spring 2015. The assessment identified the following as significant drivers of youth violence in Worcester: family stress; unemployment; early childhood trauma; generational cycles of gang involvement; limited neighborhood recreation opportunities; and punitive school discipline. During the assessment period, youth violence spiked. This difficult reality sparked a sense of urgency among city leadership to identify solutions to this complex, multi-faceted problem.

To be able to implement needed prevention, intervention, and suppression programs, alongside engaging the community and enacting policy change, the WYVPI formed as a robust multi-sector organizational structure. This structure includes: 1) a Governance Council chaired by the City Manager and Mayor and composed of leaders from the public schools, police, health and human services, District Attorney's Office, and state agencies' 2) an Operations Team consisting of liaisons from the Governance Council, and 3) Working Groups consisting of non-profit and community-based organizations. The Governance Council's research partner team from Clark University assists with data analysis, research on best practices, information dissemination, and process facilitation. The Clark team also coordinates the completion of a community assessment every three years. By meeting weekly and informed by data, Operations addresses challenges in real time and moves the priorities of the Governance Council to action at the community level.

Due to the success of the WYVPI coupled with the recognition that defining young people in terms of youth violence is limiting, the initiative has evolved into the Governance Council on Children, Youth and Families. Two additional community-based coalitions are now part of the Council: the Together for Kids Coalition and Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester. Along with WYVPI, these coalitions share a commitment to racial equity and approach their work with urgency and through a trauma-informed lens. They have active steering committees, community developed strategic plans, and are data driven. They recognize that being a part of the Governance Council catalyzes their work, particularly when policy or system change is needed. With these coalitions at the table, the Governance Council updated its vision and mission. The **vision** is to create equitable policies and systems that work together to promote health, safety, healing and social emotional wellbeing for all children, youth, and families in Worcester. Its **mission** is to leverage our collective power to achieve equity from the start and through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood in Worcester through policy, advocacy, funding, and strategic decision making.

Based on the findings of the 2021 Assessment, the Governance Council has created a Community Advisory Board (CAB) consisting of young men and women with lived experience of violence. Moving toward of a vision of "The Community is the Table," the CAB provides insight into areas where greater investment is needed if we are to reduce violence, its impacts, and racial inequities in who is most affected. The CAB's community analysis is included in this assessment.

## 2021 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Definitions of Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence as a physical act</li> <li>• Violence as the lack of safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence as not being understood or supported</li> <li>• Racism and other systems of oppression as violence</li> </ul>
Causes of Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inaccessible and missing resources and supports</li> <li>• Lack of safe spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under-resourced community supports (e.g. youth workers)</li> <li>• Social determinants of health (e.g. quality employment, education, affordable housing)</li> </ul>
Causes of the Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punitive policies and practices instead of problem-solving</li> <li>• Lack of transparency &amp; accountability in city decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding that maintains the status quo</li> <li>• Lack of representation and lived experience among those who are in positions of power over youth</li> </ul>
Recommendations: The Community is the Table	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a Community Advisory Board as an authentic mechanism for youth and community decision-making in the WYVPI.</li> <li>2. Align the Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative with the 'Community is the Table' vision through the creation of Community Agreements.</li> <li>3. Elevate the WYVPI's Youth Resource Network (YRN) as the center of community dialogue and information sharing regarding youth violence.</li> </ol>	

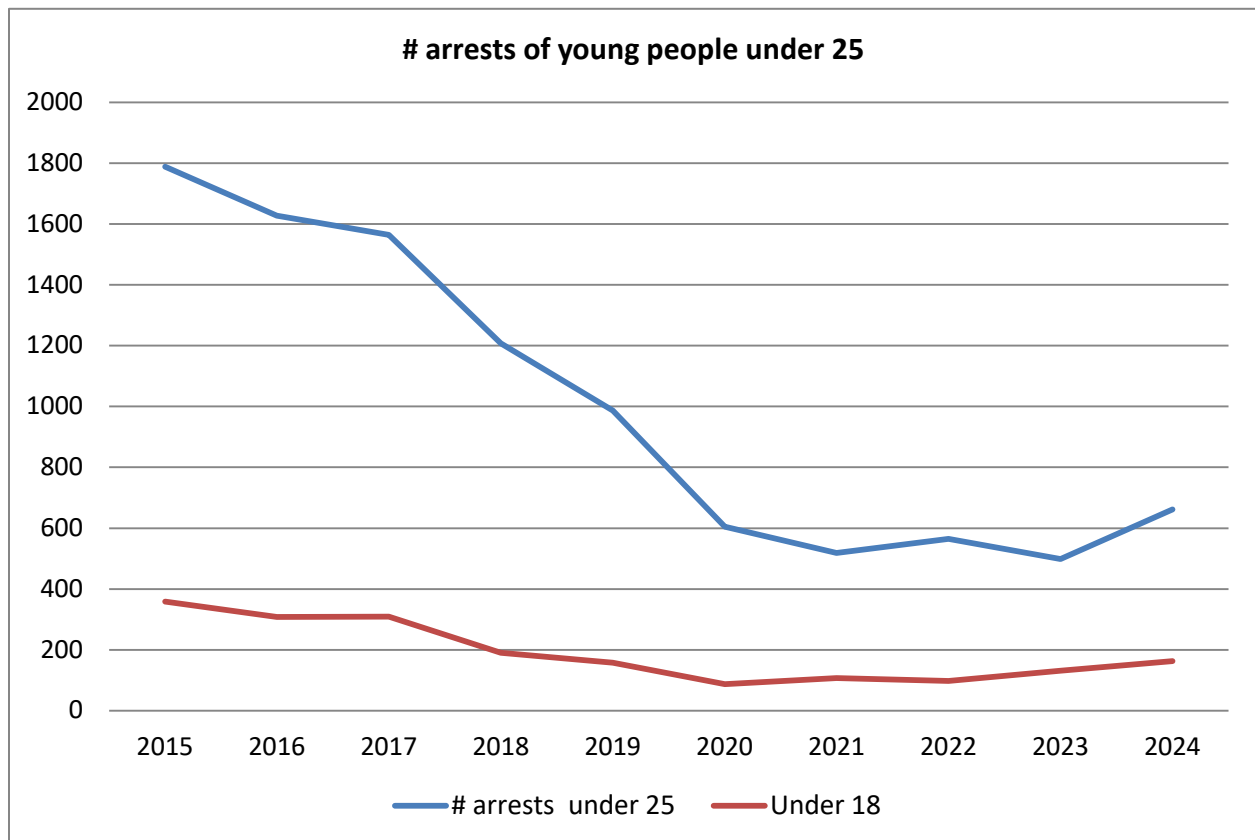
Each assessment catalyzes new action and we see steady improvement in community conditions. With this backdrop, we introduce the 2024 Community Assessment.

## Questions informing the 2024 Assessment

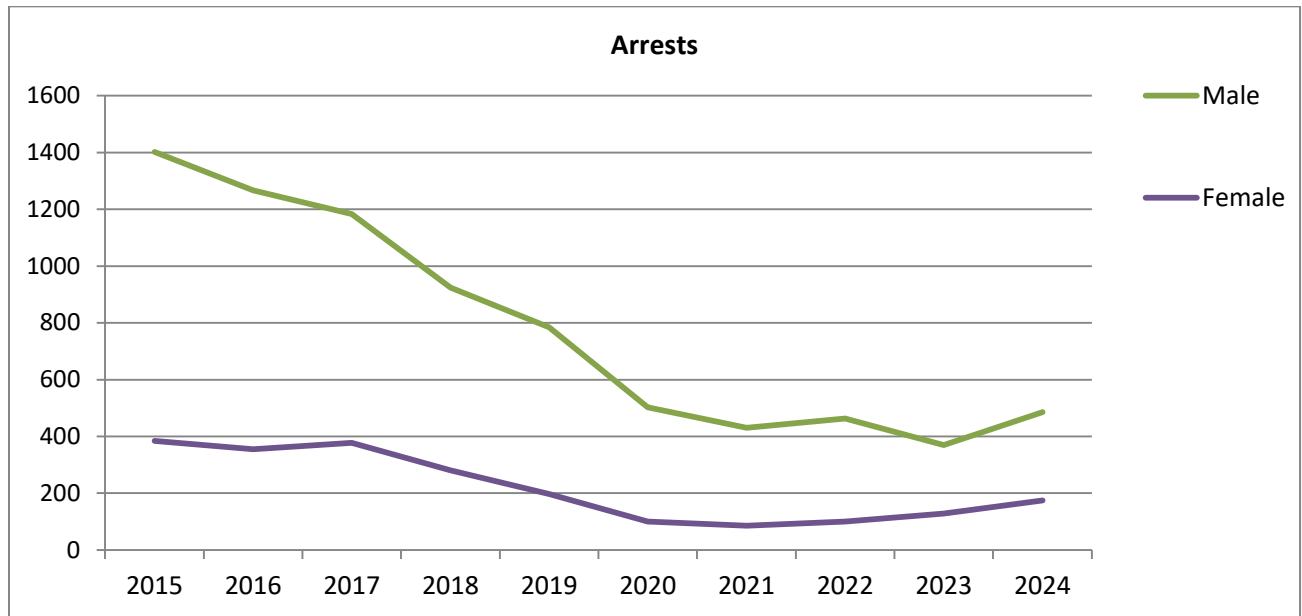
Since launching the WYVPI in 2015, arrests of young people under the age of 25 have declined 63%. Gun and knife incidents involving young people under 25 have declined 54%. Researchers from Suffolk University credited WYVPI's organizational structure for the extent of these reductions, which exceed those from similar cities across Massachusetts. However rates of violence have been on the increase since 2021, particularly for young people under the age of 18 and arrests are up substantially for females. In 2024, while the number of gun and knife incidents continued to decline, at the beginning of the year we saw a troubling spike in deadly gun and knife violence involving young people. Thankfully, this spike appears to have dissipated with many fewer young people involved in gun and knife incidents over the summer and into the fall and winter of 2024.

The following five data points inform the questions guiding the 2024 assessment:

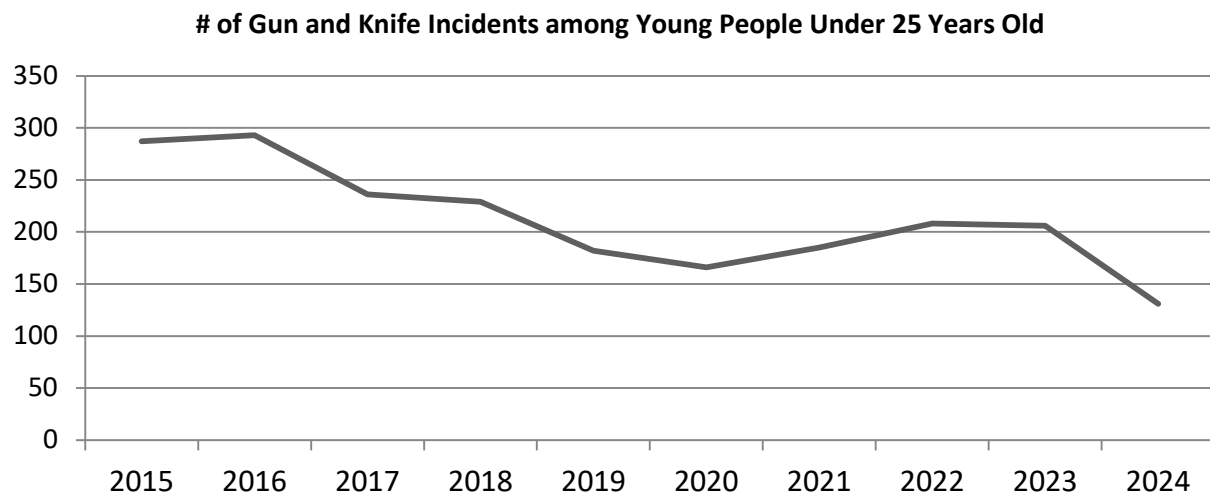
1. **Arrests of young people under 18 have increased since the pandemic.** While arrests of young people under 18 have declined substantially since 2015, post-pandemic—since 2021, there has been a 52% increase in youth arrests of those under 18. The top five reasons youth under the age of 18 were arrested in 2024 are: Disorderly Conduct, Warrant Arrest, Aggravated Assault, Weapon Law Violation, and Simple Assault. There has been a 71% increase in weapon law violations since 2021. Juvenile Justice Reform of 2018 explains a great deal of the reduction in juvenile arrests achieved prior to 2020; and therefore it is disturbing that we are seeing an increase of young people under 18 being arrested.



2. Since 2021, there has been a **106% increase in the arrest of females; however it has declined** 54% since 2015. The top reasons females were arrested in 2024 are: Simple Assaults, Aggravated Assaults, Warrant Arrests, Trespassing, Disorderly Conduct, and Destruction of Property.

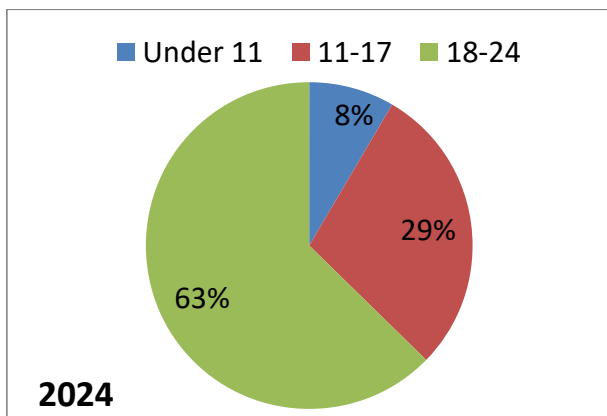
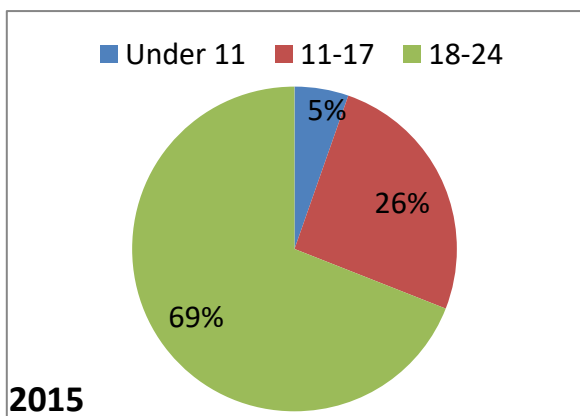


3. Gun and knife incidents have decreased 54% since 2015. After a post-pandemic increase, incidents declined substantially in 2024. Of the 284 young people involved in gun or knife incidents in 2024, only 49 individual young people, or 17%, were arrested. The remainder were victims, witnesses, or otherwise present during the incident, presenting a significant trauma burden being shouldered by the city's young people.



4. In 2024, females were involved in 26 gun incidents. In two of these cases, they were arrested or charged. In 92% of the cases they were victims, witnesses or other. In comparison, males were involved in 94 gun incidents. They were arrested, charged, or a suspect 34% of the time. Forty percent of the time they were victims. Unlike males, females are very unlikely to be arrested for a Weapon Law Violation (3 arrests in 2024).
5. While the majority of gun and knife incidents involve young people who are 18-24 years old, the proportion of youth involved who are 11-17 and children under 11 have increased since 2015.

Age	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Under 11	32	24	32	34	26	40	25	24	35	24
11--17	153	133	139	88	70	81	99	156	116	82
18-24	412	475	376	384	250	307	257	306	318	178



These five findings shaped the guiding questions and process for the 2024 Assessment:

- **What is driving the increase in female arrests?**
- **Why did violence become more deadly at the start of 2024? What caused its rapid decline?**
- **What is driving the increase in weapon law violations among youth who are under 18 years old?**
- **What resources are available for young people who are victims of gun violence to support their healing and to prevent retaliatory violence? Are there different resources for males and females?**

## 2024 Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative Assessment Process

Over the course of 2024, we brought these data to various tables for conversations and collective analysis, including the Governance Council for Children, Youth, and Families. To harness the wisdom and information from the coalitions that are part of the Governance Council, we convened Youth Futures: A Data-Driven Conversation on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

At this Data Summit, we heard presentations from:

- Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester
- Together for Kids Coalition
- Investing in Girls Alliance
- Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative's Community Advisory Board
- Worcester Community Connections Coalition with the Division of Youth Opportunities

Each Coalition's presentation highlighted factors that impact children, youth, and family well-being in Worcester. This conversation provided some answers to our assessment questions and raised new questions and opportunities for collaboration and advocacy. What follows is a high level summary of the data presented by each Coalition. [Here is the link to all of the Summit presentations.](#)



## Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester

### Major Themes

- Structural racism
- Access to affordable, reliable, safe transportation
- Food access points
- Access to affordable, safe housing
- Access to quality, reliable broadband
- Navigating public benefits
- Workforce shortage and reimbursement rates
- Culturally representative healthcare
- Stigma prevents use of existing resources

### Summit Participant Reactions & Actions

- Participants wondered who are the points of contact in the community that can help people navigate systems and do so in a non-stigmatizing, culturally representative way.
- The idea of a community guidance counselor was raised as a person who could help people with housing, transportation, access to health care and mental health care, and other resources, particularly in light of the divide in access to broadband internet.
- Participants were able to connect the community-level data—"the big picture" to individual families' stories and situations to see how systemic barriers to food, housing and other resources create toxic stress and impact child safety and wellbeing.
- *"Workforce shortage issue seems to be an area where we should be getting folks into a pipeline to train and earn degrees and certificates for these medical programs. Not just CNA and medical assisting positions! Other types of technical training like radiology or surgical techs, nursing, physician assisting...Let's create the pipelines for youth of color and youth who have CORIs."*
- It was also raised that we must not only address current forms of discrimination, but that we need to bring healing to those who have been affected to break generational trauma from structural racism *"In regards to the BIPOC population feeling of discriminatory treatment, this is a topic that I have engaged in for over 40 years, other than conversation what is actually being done to not only bring change but most importantly healing to those who have been affected?"*

### Links

#### Community conversations

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1x84ECInMo2YHsO31AxvQY0nK70LsVMuJ/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=107133143662344826708&rtpof=true&sd=true>

CHA Dashboard : <https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/2024greaterworcestercha/demographic-profile>

#### CYCHIP timeline/process:

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAGPWDeIZ\\_E/A8PXc6h1GKEhDoOaO9bZdw/edit?utm\\_content=DAGPWDeIZ\\_E&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link2&utm\\_source=sharebutton](https://www.canva.com/design/DAGPWDeIZ_E/A8PXc6h1GKEhDoOaO9bZdw/edit?utm_content=DAGPWDeIZ_E&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton)



## Together for Kids Coalition

### Key Data Points

- Births: Roughly 2200 a year
- Preterm birth rate: 831 in 2023 (9.7% of live births)
- Infant mortality rate overall and disaggregated by race (dated information)
- Parental mental health/postpartum depression (lack local data but in MA 15% of new mothers experience postpartum depression)
- Newborn Home Visiting: Roughly 180 births each month, yet only 30-80 referrals are made
- Number of families with vouchers on childcare waitlist: at the time of the summit 1,355 families were on the waitlist
- Childcare deserts (number with vouchers on waitlist by zip code): Bell Hill, Vernon Hill, and Main South
- Preschool and Early Learning: most WPS preschool and Headstart programs are 2.5 hours a day and full day goes to 2 pm

### Summit Participant Reactions & Actions

1. The relationship between early childhood and maternal wellbeing and violence; and how early support to address trauma can deter later involvement in violence.
  - a. Address the toxic stress for Black women and address the connection between mental health diagnoses and DCF involvement for families.
  - b. Support is needed for single parent households and other families facing a great deal of hardship, including, paternal health and support for single fathers.
  - c. Address the legacy of harms inflicted on communities of color, not just through services but through acknowledgement and supporting the healing of that harm.
2. Workforce development in the early childhood domain
  - a. Training to medical staff regarding childbirth, including the role of doulas in a more holistic, culturally respectful understanding about the birth process.
  - b. Advocating to increase wages for early education and care providers.
  - c. Developing pipelines from youth employment programs to build the early education and care workforce.
3. Supports and resources needed at the neighborhood level,
  - a. More vouchers, licensed centers and home day cares to serve more families—particularly those in what we have identified as childcare deserts.
  - b. Similar to the idea of the community guidance counselor that was raised in response to the Coalition's presentation, participants thought community mentor centers at the neighborhood level would be helpful to families.
4. Advocate to get leaders to prioritize the issues raised by TFKC and provide more community education about what is meant by an early childhood system.
5. The importance of getting regular access to timely data from the state.

Links [https://www.canva.com/design/DAGW17CGs8M/ikQUhsVVKxOJ-2ETHryyjA/view?utm\\_content=DAGW17CGs8M&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=editor#12](https://www.canva.com/design/DAGW17CGs8M/ikQUhsVVKxOJ-2ETHryyjA/view?utm_content=DAGW17CGs8M&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor#12)

## Investing in Girls Alliance

### Major Themes

1. Benchmark key indicators of girls' wellbeing and service utilization and needs
2. Positive impact of participation in gender specific programming on girls'
  - mental health,
  - self-advocacy skills,
  - overall healthy habits

### Summit Participant Reactions & Action Steps

1. Responding to the data on girls' mental health, they emphasized that the community needs to understand the high rates of stress, bullying, sadness, and depression as daily stressors for girls.
  - Is there a correlation between girls who say they are impacted and those who are also involved in violence as a victim or perpetrator?
  - Recognize the connection between girls' wellbeing and the community's wellbeing, *"Girls' mental health and safety are directly connected with the well-being of the community, including the healthy development of our youngest children."*
  - Disaggregate data to understand the experiences and outcomes of girls and young women with different identities.
2. Types of programs and supports needed for girls and young women.
  - Gender-specific programming impacts girls' outcomes and that participation in a variety of activities is more impactful than just one.
  - In spite of the evidence, there are very limited gender specific options and limited investment being made in these types of programs.
  - Expand opportunities for girls, including in entrepreneurship and leadership development.
  - Community partnerships, collaboration across organizations, and with the schools would be needed to expand gender-specific programming.
  - Incorporate girls' experiences and an intersectional lens in program development. Participatory research that include Black girls and girls of color as co-researchers would lead to the development of programs based on their unique conceptualizations of safety and belonging.
3. Data equity and transparency is key to the identification of gaps and equitable resource allocation.
  - Concern that IIGA had to pay for the Youth Health Survey dataset.

### [Investing in Girls Alliance Data Presentation](#)

## Worcester Community Connections Coalition with the Division of Youth Opportunities.

### Major Themes and Data Points

The survey highlights differences in the types of programs families prioritize. Homework help is the top priority across all groups, Spanish-speaking families place a higher emphasis on career development and arts-based programs, while English-speaking families prioritize recreation and social-emotional support. Families are also looking for leadership development through opportunities such as a Counselor In Training (CIT) program. Cost, transportation, hours of operation, and lack of available programs are barriers for families who are balancing work schedules, financial challenges, and limited neighborhood resources. Families struggle to find programs for children 4-12 years old. 39% of families need programs for girls.

Spanish-speaking families identified Main South, North Worcester, and Grafton Street/Central Worcester as the most challenging areas for finding programs. Many Spanish-speaking families rely more on community networks and word-of-mouth to find after-school care rather than schools or social media. Expanding bilingual outreach efforts and translation services could significantly improve access to programs for Spanish-speaking families.

Providers face high costs of transportation, limited grant funding, high staff turnover and staff training costs. *"We can't pay enough; they leave for better pay or easier jobs."*

#### Top Priorities for English-Speaking Families

- Homework Help – **82%**
- Recreation – **68.8%**
- Social-Emotional Support – **64.1%**

#### Top Priorities for Spanish-Speaking Families:

- Homework Help – **85.2%**
- Career Development (CIT Programs) – **57.7%**
- Arts-Based Programs – **63%**

### Summit Participant Reactions & Action Steps

1. The Need for Cross-Sector Collaboration
  - Schools play a pivotal role in connecting families to after-school care, yet engagement between schools and after-school program providers remains inconsistent. *"Schools are the hub that connects most youth and families. The schools were not present in the room for this data summit, but their footprint is entrenched in all data."*
2. Collaborating across sectors—including schools, local government, and community organizations—is essential for improving access to after-school programming.
  - A city-wide initiative focused on affordable, high-quality after-school programs could help address current disparities across neighborhoods.
  - Stronger school partnerships and improved alignment between educational institutions and community programs will help ensure that all children have access to high-quality after-school care.
  - *"Very clear alignment in the highest priority neighborhoods! Time for needing care is also very consistent with our findings at TFKC."*
3. Addressing Workforce and Funding Challenges in After-School Care
  - A sustainable after-school care model will require increased investment in staffing and program funding, as well as policies that ensure adequate compensation for after-school educators.

#### WCCC/DYO Presentation:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1595ZkMemgjlmWyhSh9ryiUNxb83tXiwY/view?usp=sharing>

## Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative's Community Advisory Board

The WYVPI presented the data that frame this report. Here, we include the Community Advisory Board's assessment of the causes of youth violence and the need for particular intervention strategies. We include the whole of their analysis as a way to center the perspectives of those with lived experience.

### Community Advisory Board Community Assessment

Members of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) engaged in a thorough analysis and reflection of their early experiences in Worcester, including experiences within, and outside, K-12 environments, particularly centering out-of-school time and after-school programs and adult experiences in community-based environments. This lifespan analysis, from early childhood to adulthood, provided valuable insights into the evolution of organizational programs, services, and their broader community impact over time. The primary objective of this inquiry was to gain an understanding of the experiences of system-involved youth and adults within these education and community-based settings, assess the effectiveness of various programs and initiatives, and evaluate how available services and resources have adapted to meet their needs and the needs of the wider community. These fundamental analytical elements may reveal indicators or causes that influence violence. Furthermore, we aimed to identify opportunities for transforming and redesigning programs and services to better serve system-involved youth.

### Data Theme #1: Experiences in Community-Based Spaces and Programs

For young people in Worcester, third spaces (out-of-time school programming, community-based programs, etc.) served as community hubs where friends gathered, played sports, and enjoyed recreational activities. CAB members indicated that although these spaces met some social needs, they did not adequately focus on supporting the developmental needs of Black boys and boys of color. A CAB member reflected: *"I spent most of my life asking questions and trying to figure it out on my own path because I was just trying to make it so I can help all my people that was going through the storm too."* The lack of structured guidance left many youths feeling isolated and struggling to establish a sense of belonging.

Without direct service links and the necessary supportive systems, CAB members often faced challenges of invisibility while searching for safety and refuge, which intensified their previous feelings of marginalization. Frequently labeled as troubled or deviant, adolescent program participants found their reputations made them overly visible in these settings, complicating their feelings of both invisibility and hypervisibility, ultimately leading to their exclusion. **Lacking alternative spaces focused on system-involved youth, they started to form communities and social gatherings in their neighborhoods.**

One CAB member shared, *"Parents were always working late so I gravitated to the streets/friends/no programs or positive role model to guide me in the right direction."* Another CAB member described their experience, *"I chilled with a street member harder because he was the only one that I knew that was good. So, I learned how to sell drugs to help my mom."* This highlights how the absence of strong support networks can lead youth to seek belonging and guidance in street environments. One participant noted, *"I was 15 when I first got arrested, proving this was the right thing to do because I was chasing the wrong attention."* This underscores the necessity of early intervention programs that provide youth with positive pathways rather than leaving them to navigate challenging environments alone.

### CAB Recommendations:

The implementation of early adolescent violence prevention initiatives and programs is essential, particularly for system-involved youth. Additionally, CAB members stressed the importance of addressing organizational structures and systems that inadvertently lead to the marginalization of youth, pushing them toward street environments and designing infrastructures that move toward equitable systems.

### **Data Theme #2: Coalition Building within the Community and Out-of-Time School Programming**

CAB members view out-of-school time programs and K-12 programming as distinct, siloed learning environments, despite both playing a significant role in their growth and development as young people. They have found that experiences during the school day greatly influence how young people engage in after-school programming. However, there is minimal support for them to discuss their experiences, solve related problems, or obtain advocacy; few advocates are available to represent them. These separated learning settings leave young people to navigate their emotions—positive or negative—without adequate interventions or adult assistance near their experiences over time. A CAB member described the gap in programming: *“Community centers bring a sense of safety and belonging but need to be built to mirror the community.”* Another shared, *“There is a lack of culture in community spaces... lack of unity across the board.”* Another participant emphasized, *“Positive role models are needed in the community centers.”* Without individuals to guide and mentor young people, their ability to navigate personal and educational challenges remains limited.

#### **CAB Recommendations:**

CAB members stressed the critical importance of having access to ongoing learning opportunities and broader networks of care and support that extend beyond standard school hours.

- **Learning Opportunities:** CAB members propose allocating funds to develop more youth education programs, aimed at enhancing skills and knowledge gained during school hours, along with workforce training programs that admit professional skills not typically offered by K-12 systems. These educational initiatives should target areas such as literacy, mental health, nutrition, and financial literacy, as they are crucial for addressing community violence that endangers mental health and futures while promoting social and economic mobility for community transformation. Programs should engage participants as co-developers, as collaborating with youth enhances their agency in creating change. Recognizing their perspectives and expertise helps shape and ensure the effectiveness of services for system-involved youth. Additionally, accessibility to these programs is vital to boost community awareness and encourage more members to seek and utilize services. Lastly, CAB members stress the importance of making it essential to present youth with options outside traditional education pathways.
- **Organizational Networks of Care:** CAB members expressed that the transition between K-12 and out-of-school programs provides a unique opportunity to offer joint services and resources for families, offering culturally relevant wraparound support. Designing community-driven collaborative networks post-school hours ensures students and their families have access to necessary resources, addressing the existing lack of support. Therefore, CAB members advocate for building coalitions between third spaces and K-12 educational institutions to create collaborative and shared learning environments. One member suggested, *“Organizations could do more to go into the neighborhoods that really need the services instead of expecting the community to come to them.”*

### **Data Theme #3: Revitalize the Neighborhood by Organizing Community Events Aimed at Fostering Unity**

CAB members discussed community engagement strategies that have effectively united various parts of the city. Community engagement efforts such as The Burnouts, Carnival cookouts, and basketball tournaments were designed to attract young people, enhance participation, and convey a message that the community invests in their well-being. The goal of these events was to simply bring together those affected by community and gang violence. They emphasized using community events to resonate with both residents and the city, effectively reducing instances of community or street violence during that time. CAB members feel that community engagement efforts signify to the youth and the wider community that the city is committed to its young residents, highlighting that investing in them is essential. Furthermore, these events acknowledge that the insights of young people are vital for social transformation and foster a sense of validation, encouraging them to contribute to building community infrastructures that advocate for unity, peace, and safety. A CAB member recalled, *“These events used to bring all sides of the city together... but they became obsolete over the years.”* The absence of these initiatives has contributed to a sense of disconnection among community members. Another participant reflected on the impact of such events: *“These events showed us the city actually cared about us. Without them, it’s like we were forgotten.”*

#### **CAB Recommendations:**

Members of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) emphasize the significance of the planning committee reflecting the community's diversity in terms of lived experiences and accessibility to prominent neighborhood representatives. The objective of the proposed community events is to establish a rapport and cultivate relationships between currently incarcerated individuals and those who have previously experienced incarceration. These events should be intentional, capturing ideas and engaging community members in progressive planning through surveys or assessments. Such engagement is rarely conducted in community-based initiatives, yet it presents a valuable opportunity for strategic input in community development. In other words, how can we leverage these community efforts to construct sustainable community infrastructures and systems? While it poses a significant challenge and is a huge question to grapple with, contemplating this question would bring us closer to envisioning what it entails to design for and by equity.

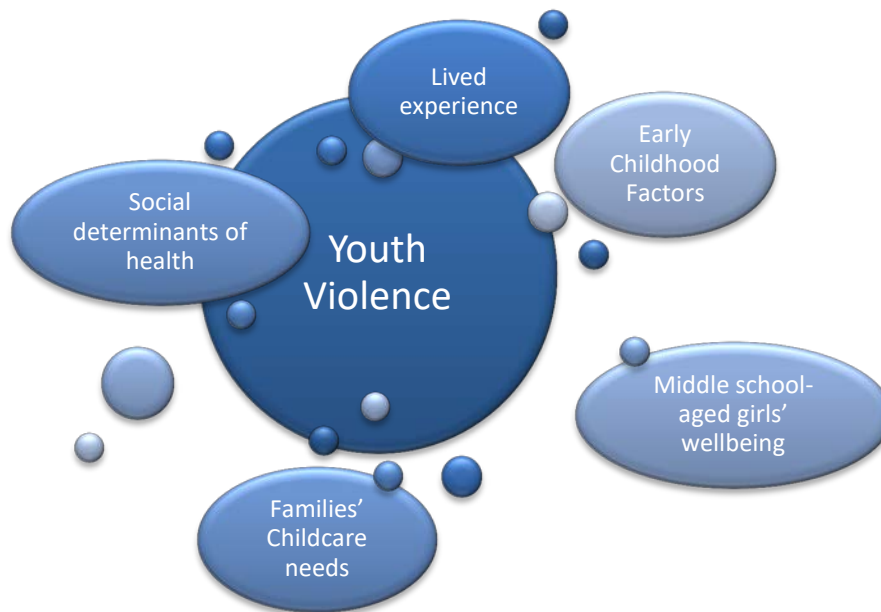
#### **Data Theme #4: The Development and Provision of Adult Re-Entry Services**

CAB members emphasize the critical need for robust adult re-entry services that foster social and economic mobility. These services should incorporate mental health support, particularly for substance use, as well as workforce training such as obtaining a CDL, financial literacy—including taxes and investments—and other elements that enhance the social capital of participants and their families. The program must also extend support to families, as they bear the impact of incarceration too. Individuals undergoing re-entry should have access to necessary resources without being compelled to leave their community to find adequate services. One CAB member shared their personal transformation: *“At 24-29, I had a family, realized the streets ain’t gon’ love me back. I put my kids first and let go of the streets, got my CDL, and now I am able to give back.”*

#### **Recommendations:**

CAB members advocate for an all-encompassing adult re-entry initiative aimed at delivering holistic services and resource centers specifically for Black and Brown men and women. This initiative should offer comprehensive support in crucial areas such as job placement, housing, and additional services that are vital for reducing recidivism.

## Data Connections and Action Steps



- **What is driving the increase in female arrests?**
- **Why did violence become more deadly at the start of 2024? What caused its rapid decline?**
- **What is driving the increase in weapon law violations among youth who are under 18 years old?**
- **What resources are available for young people who are victims of gun violence to support their healing and to prevent retaliatory violence? Are there different resources for males and females?**

The following seven points do not offer direct answers to the assessment questions, but rather provide a multi-perspective, community-driven roadmap for addressing the drivers of violence and the inequitable impacts of violence felt by communities of color. Seeing the through lines across the presentations, offers new points of collaboration, shared advocacy and joint action.

1. Support for healing from generational trauma and systemic racism.
2. Advocate for wage increases for childcare workers and resources for young families and single-parent households—including father-headed single parent households. Increased vouchers for early childhood and out of school time care is a critical need.
3. Address barriers facing families to access after school programs. Address barriers organizations face providing after school programs (transportation, funding, language, geography). Acknowledge different types of resources families seek for their children. Integrate authentic mentors and role models.



4. Integrated, Community-Centered Solutions—one solution addresses multiple problems
  1. Workforce pipeline development for medical and childcare providers informed by a culturally respectful, generational trauma-aware approach. Build out the workforce pathway, from Worcester Cares 4 Kids through WPS early childhood curriculum tracks, to QCC to WSU. Support this pipeline all the way through and address the “leaky” places; like transition between programs, education, and pay scales to foster workforce stability and equity.
  2. Establish community-based ‘guidance counselors’ and mentorship centers to address navigational barriers.
  3. Coalitions, partnerships and structured pathways are essential to creating integrated, systemic solutions that address violence, incarceration, and safety.
  4. Re-entry services should include family support to address impacts of incarceration of families with young children.
5. There is a clear call for gender-responsive approaches that prioritize the unique needs of young girls and girls of color, particularly in violence prevention and youth programming.
  1. The responses emphasize the need for intersectional, data-informed, and collaborative approaches to support girls.
  2. There's a clear focus on mental health, safety, and leadership opportunities to empower girls within their communities.
  3. Participatory action research with Black girls to understand what youth development and safety mean to them.
  4. Expanding gender-specific initiatives within Youth Worker Training Institute, Credible Messenger programs, and HOPE Academy are essential to support and guide at-risk females.
6. The call for data transparency and equitable access is a recurring concern. Without that data, systemic barriers to actionable change persist. Participants consistently emphasize the need for detailed, disaggregated data to better understand and address systemic inequities.
7. The CAB is seen as a vital platform for amplifying voices with lived experience and fostering trust in community-driven interventions. CAB’s recommendations are integrated in this report.

**The following chart summarizes these themes into integrated action plan that has been endorsed by five community coalitions. This integrated plan contains three master plans with three cross-cutting strategies. These plans and strategies rest on four common pillars.**



**INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN: Coalitions, partnerships and structured pathways are essential for integrated, systemic solutions that promote wellness and address violence, address the impacts of incarceration, and foster safety equitably**

<b>Master Plans (Aligned and integrated into the CHIP and CYCHIP)</b>	<b>Advance Early Education and Care Master Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase resources for young families and single-parent households—including father-headed single parent households <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Universal Home Visiting</li> <li>○ Early education and care availability for all families</li> <li>○ Maternal and Paternal health</li> <li>○ Early childhood mental health</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Advance Worcester Afterschool Master Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Integrate authentic mentors and role models.</li> <li>• Community-based resources doing programming during school hours as alternative to punitive practices</li> <li>• Address barriers facing families to access after school programs</li> </ul>	<b>Advance Master Plan to Advance Gender-Specific Programming</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on mental health, safety, and leadership to empower girls and young women</li> <li>• Integrate intersectional, data-informed approaches</li> <li>• Expand gender-specific initiatives within Youth Worker Training Institute, Credible Messenger programs, and HOPE Academy</li> <li>• Conduct Participatory Action Research with Black girls to understand what youth development and safety mean to them.</li> </ul>	
<b>Cross-Cutting Strategies</b>	<b>Workforce Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce pipeline development for medical and childcare providers informed by a culturally respectful, generational trauma-aware approach that spans early childhood through school aged youth.</li> <li>• Advocate for wage increases for childcare workers and youth workers</li> </ul>	<b>Support for healing from generational trauma and systemic racism.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid trauma response systems</li> <li>• Healing circles for generational gang members</li> <li>• Re-entry services include family support to address impacts of incarceration on families with young children</li> <li>• Establish community-based ‘guidance counselors’ and mentorship centers to address navigational barriers</li> </ul>	<b>Address organizational barriers and constraints to providing childcare and after school programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of vouchers</li> <li>• Transportation,</li> <li>• Funder requirements,</li> <li>• Language capacity</li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Administrative costs</li> </ul>	
<b>Implementation Pillars (without these things, nothing else is possible)</b>	Shared language and definitions about children and youth development addressing populations served, gaps and overlapping work	Data transparency and equitable access to detailed, disaggregated, and timely data. Without that data, systemic barriers to equitable, actionable change persist. Include data that are not required by funders.	Integration of lived experience in all Master Plans through the CAB, Family Advisory Board, and others to foster trust in community-driven interventions.	A commitment of sustained, dedicated funding from city of Worcester and local foundations
<b>Coalitions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester</li> <li>• Together for Kids Coalition/Family Advisory Board</li> <li>• Investing in Girls Alliance</li> <li>• Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative/Community Advisory Board</li> <li>• Worcester Community Connections Coalition</li> </ul>			

## Attachments

### Gun and Knife Incidents

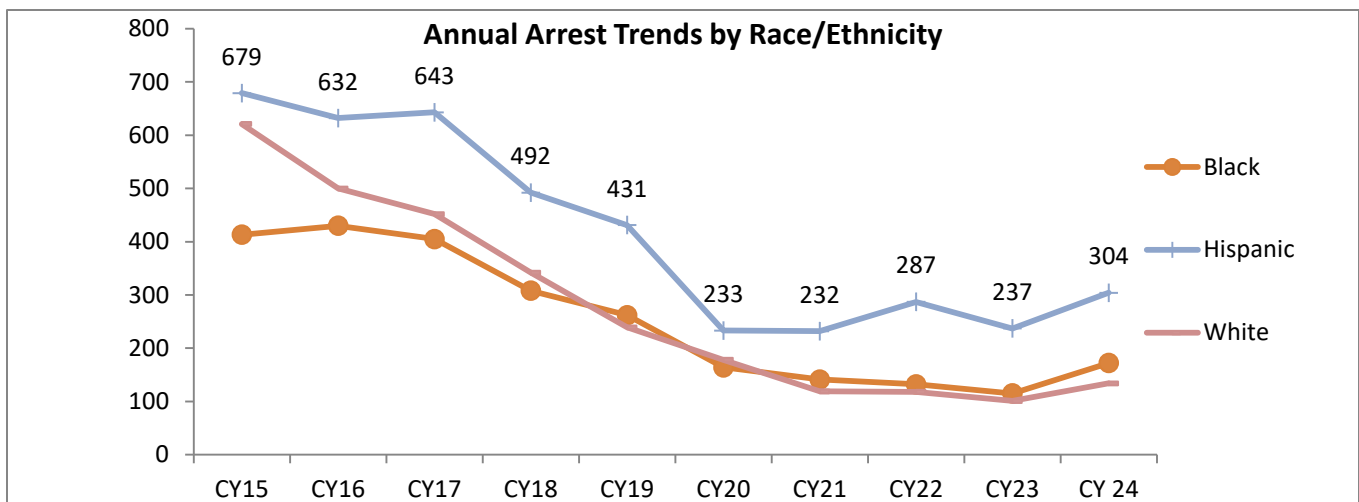
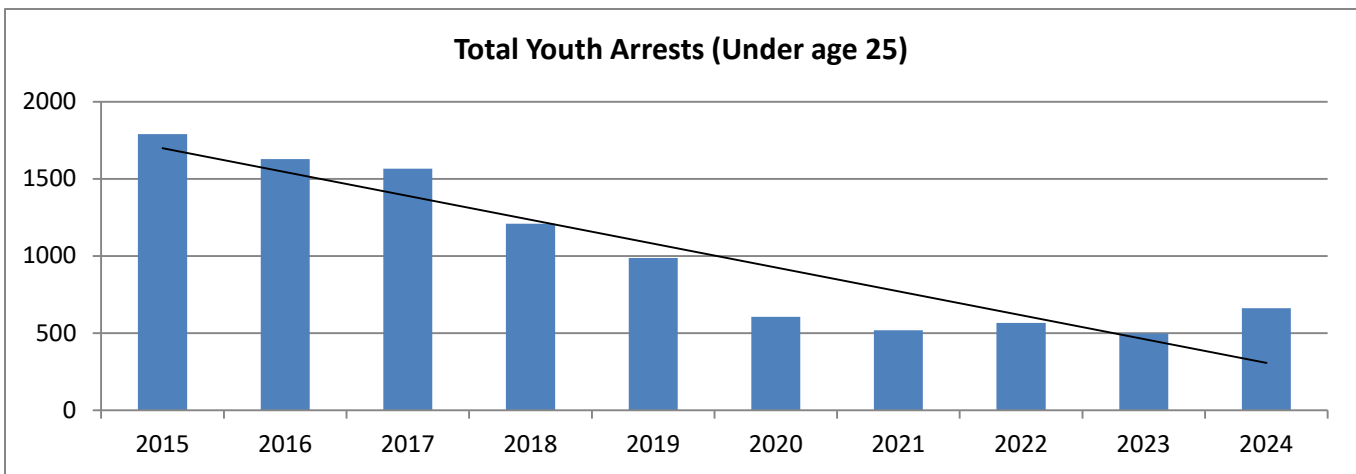
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
# of gun and knife incidents	287	293	236	229	182	166	185	208	206	131
# of youth involved	597	632	547	506	346	428	381	486	469	284
Arrested	98	116	77	71	43	60	45	52	38	49
Victim	127	132	80	82	91	70	59	84	100	96
Witness	52	41	31	28	26	30	31	37	40	37
Other	284	306	325	292	163	245	213	264	260	68
18-24	412	475	376	384	250	307	257	306	318	178
Under 18	185	157	171	122	96	121	124	180	151	106
Under 11	32	24	32	34	26	40	25	24	35	24
Male	384	372	337	278	204	260	225	283	276	185
Female	169	203	167	178	112	142	122	154	163	77
Black	110	88	99	81	44	65	41	57	47	40
Hispanic	164	178	147	138	85	110	93	154	90	63
White	114	108	73	59	48	50	49	46	31	26
Unknown	197	247	214	224	183	220	209	301	318	151

### Arrests

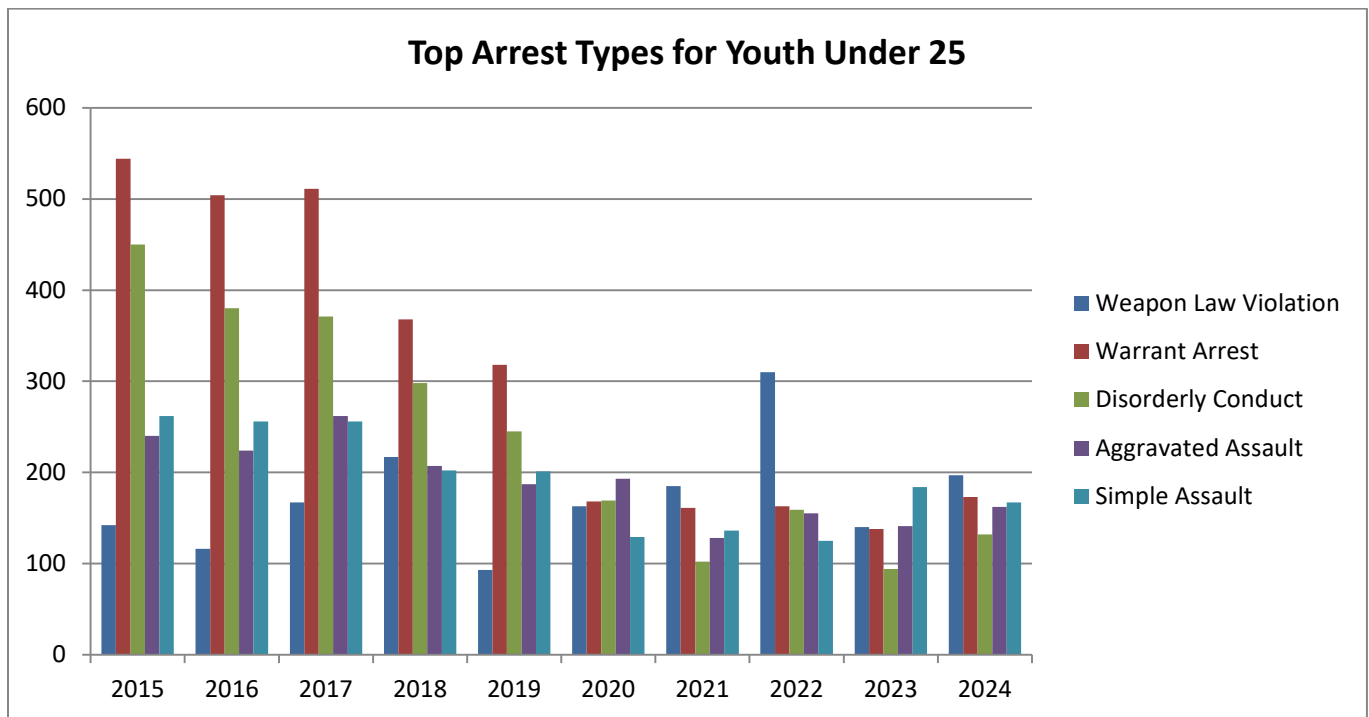
Arrests	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
# arrests	1789	1628	1565	1208	987	605	518	565	498	662
Under 18	359	308	309	190	157	87	107	97	131	163
Male	1402	1267	1183	924	784	503	430	463	370	486
Female	384	355	377	281	197	100	85	100	128	175
Black	413	430	405	308	262	164	141	132	115	172
Hispanic	679	632	643	492	431	233	232	287	237	304
White	621	500	452	342	239	178	119	118	101	134

Arrests	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Weapon Law Violation</b>	142	116	167	217	93	163	185	310	140	197
<b>Warrant Arrest</b>	544	504	511	368	318	168	161	163	138	173
<b>Disorderly Conduct</b>	450	380	371	298	245	169	102	159	94	132
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	240	224	262	207	187	193	128	155	141	162
<b>Simple Assault</b>	262	256	256	202	201	129	136	125	184	167

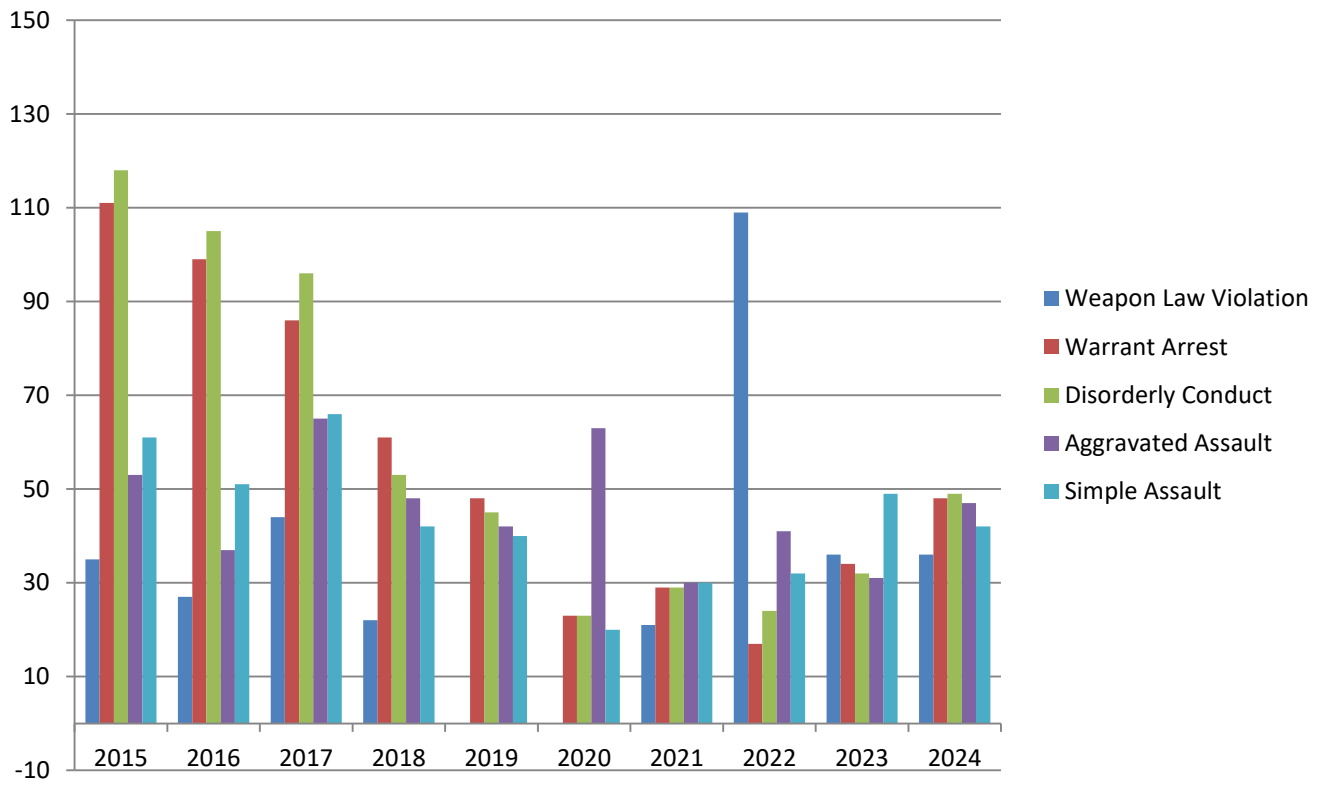
<b>Youth under 18</b>										
<b>Weapon Law Violation</b>	35	27	44	22			21	109	36	36
<b>Warrant Arrest</b>	111	99	86	61	48	23	29	17	34	48
<b>Disorderly Conduct</b>	118	105	96	53	45	23	29	24	32	49
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	53	37	65	48	42	63	30	41	31	47
<b>Simple Assault</b>	61	51	66	42	40	20	30	32	49	41



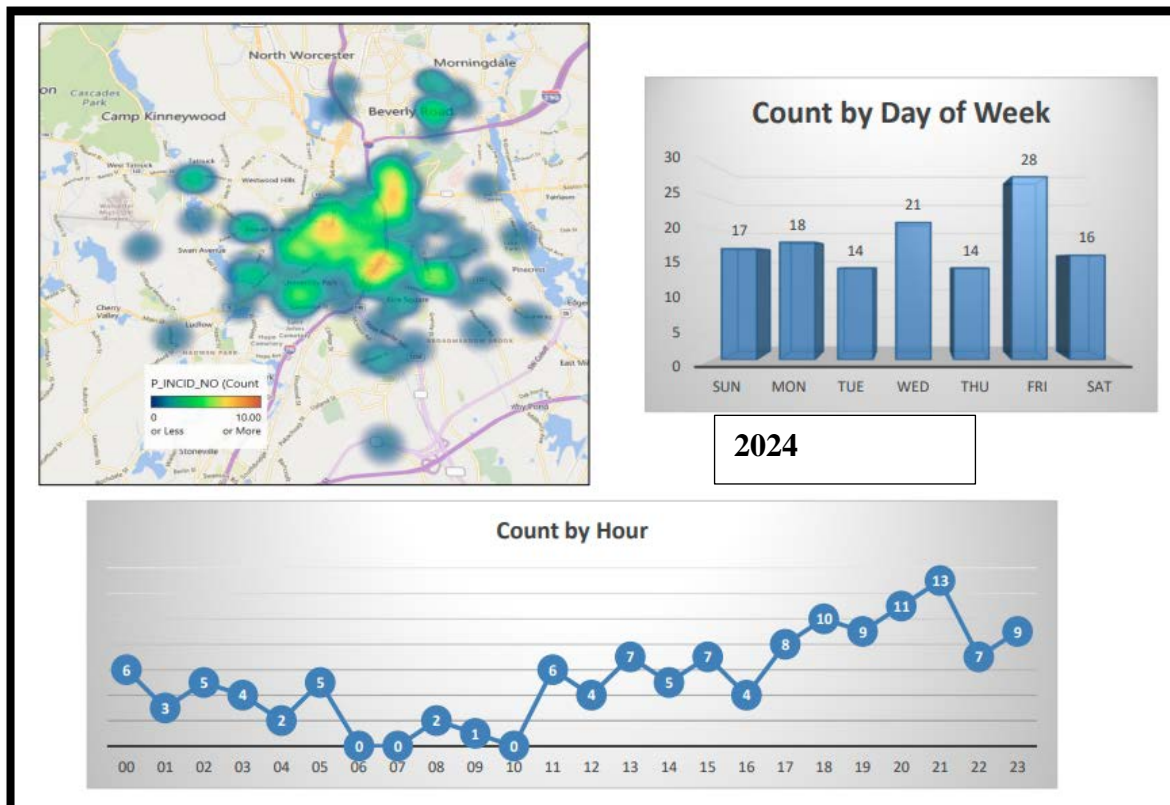
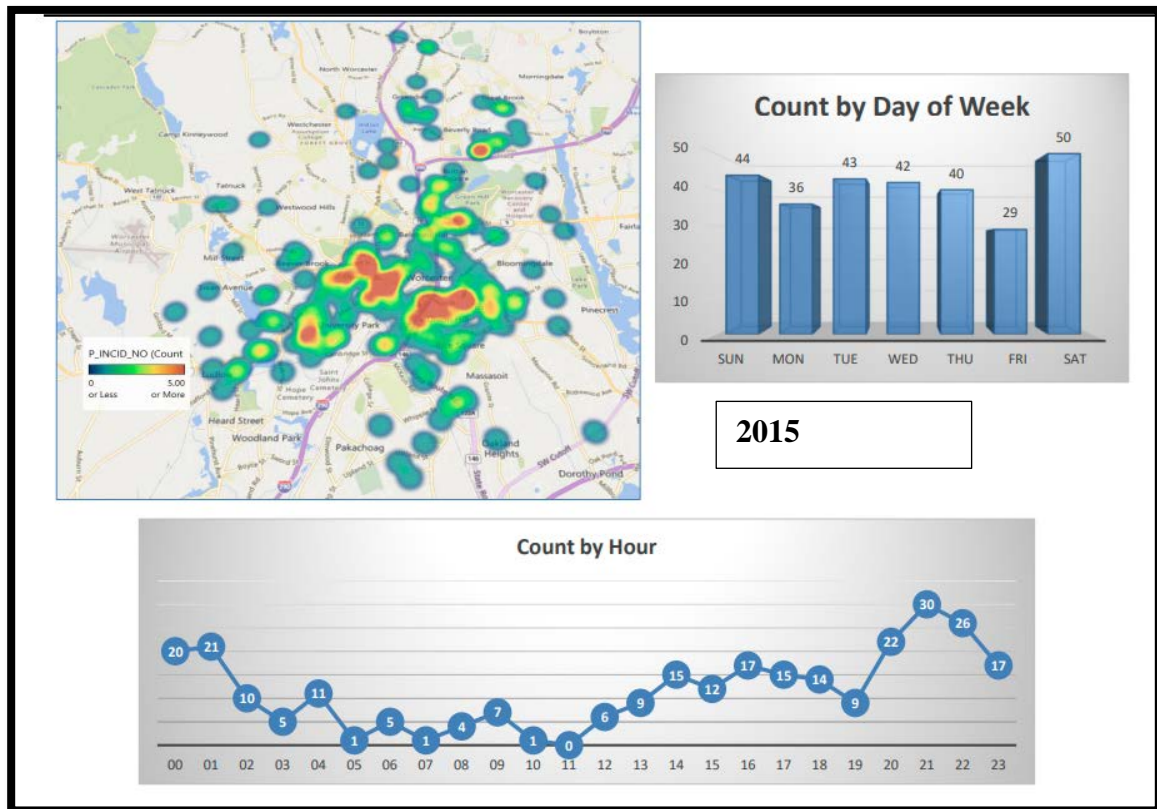
## Arrest Types



### Top Arrest Types for Youth Under 18



## Space and Time Visualizations of Gun and Knife Incidents



## Press Releases of Gun-Related Youth Violence Incidents in 2024

- On April 30<sup>th</sup>, the [19-year-old driver](#) of a sport utility vehicle that [slammed into a house](#) on Paine Street last month, moments after he had been shot in the head, has died. A teenager arrested a week after the shooting faces additional charges in what police are now terming a homicide. The crash and shooting occurred on April 30 at 73 Paine St., off Harlow Street.
- On April 26, [14-year-old Stering Baptiste Jr.](#) was found with a fatal gunshot wound inside of a Rodney Street apartment. Two 16-year-old males have been arrested in connection with the shooting.
- On April 13, [24-year-old Bob Nuah](#) was shot to death on Allendale Street. Lino Menjivar, 30, is wanted in connection with the killing. He is considered armed and dangerous.
- On March 5, [27-year-old Chasity Nuñez and her 11-year-old daughter, Zella](#), were shot dead in a car parked on Englewood Avenue. Police have arrested two men in connection with the double fatal shooting.
- On Feb. 14, 24-year-old Vesline Garnier was stabbed to death in an apartment on Douglas Street. Her domestic partner [is charged in the case](#).
- On Feb. 12, a [17-year-old male](#) was gunned down at 14 Shannon St. A 21-year-old man was arrested in connection with the shooting, and the alleged shooter's 18-year-old girlfriend was arrested as an accessory after the fact.