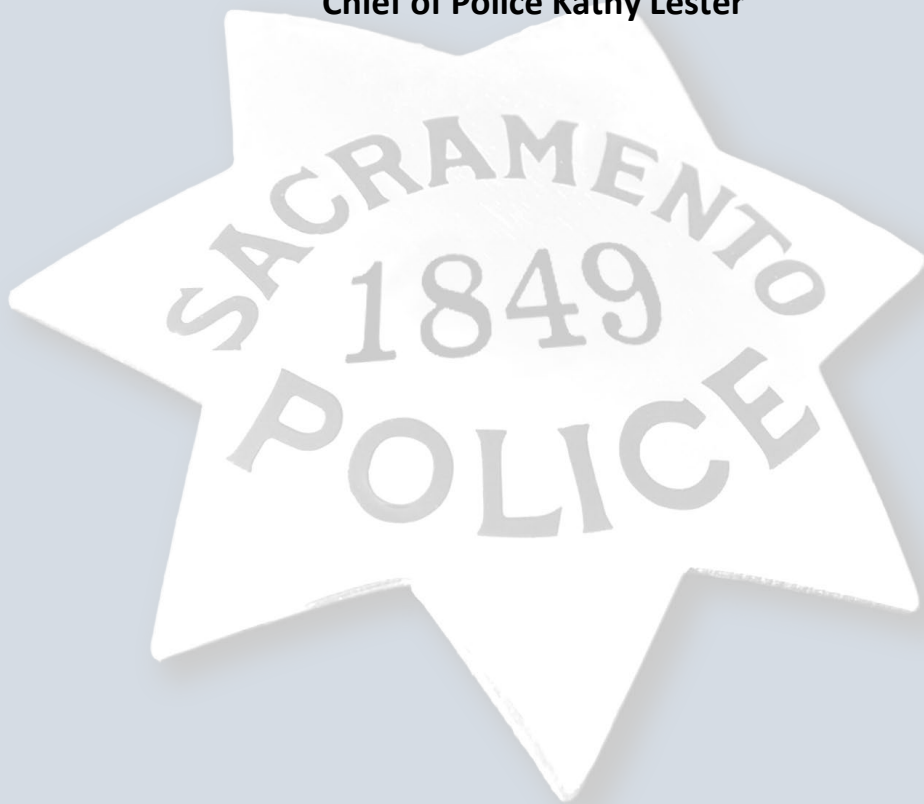


# SPD Violent Crime Reduction Strategy

Chief of Police Kathy Lester



## Background

The City of Sacramento, California's capitol city, is just under 100 square miles and has seen its population steadily grow over the last decade. The most recent US Census data reported an estimated residential population of 513,000 and the Sacramento regional population is estimated at just over 2.6 million people.<sup>1</sup> Sacramento is the entertainment and employment hub for the entire Sacramento region.

The Sacramento Police Department, which serves the citizens of the incorporated City of Sacramento, is currently authorized 769 full-time sworn police officers and 344 professional staff. However, consistent with the various employment sectors across the nation, remaining fully staffed has proven challenging. Currently, the police department is working well below the authorized staffing number in both sworn and professional staff. A significant and dedicated effort has been put into recruiting and retention, with the goal of being fully staffed to reflect our great city's diversity.

According to the Pew Research Center<sup>2</sup>, violent and property crimes significantly decreased between 1993 and 2019 across the nation. Though some crime categories remain relatively low, violent crime has increased. Gun violence across the United States rose 30% in 2020<sup>3</sup> compared to 2019. In 2021, at least 12 of the largest US cities hit an all-time high for homicides.<sup>i</sup> In Sacramento, 2021 compared to 2020 saw a 25% increase in shooting reports, a 17% rise in the number of victims shot, a 34% increase in total guns seized (1246 v. 1673), and a total of 58 homicides for the year. This was a 32.5 % increase in homicides over 2020 and a 70% increase over 2019.<sup>ii</sup>

These increases come during a time of national, state, and local police reform movements, which have significantly changed the expectations of law enforcement. Today, law enforcement organizations are expected to be more transparent, more customer service oriented, and more intentional in developing relationships and trust within their communities. The Sacramento Police Department remains committed to keeping our community safe and just as important, we remain committed to assuring members of our community feel safe. Together with our community, we at the Sacramento Police Department will develop and implement this Violent Crime Reduction Strategy (VRCS) through open communication, relationships built on trust, and collaboration.

---

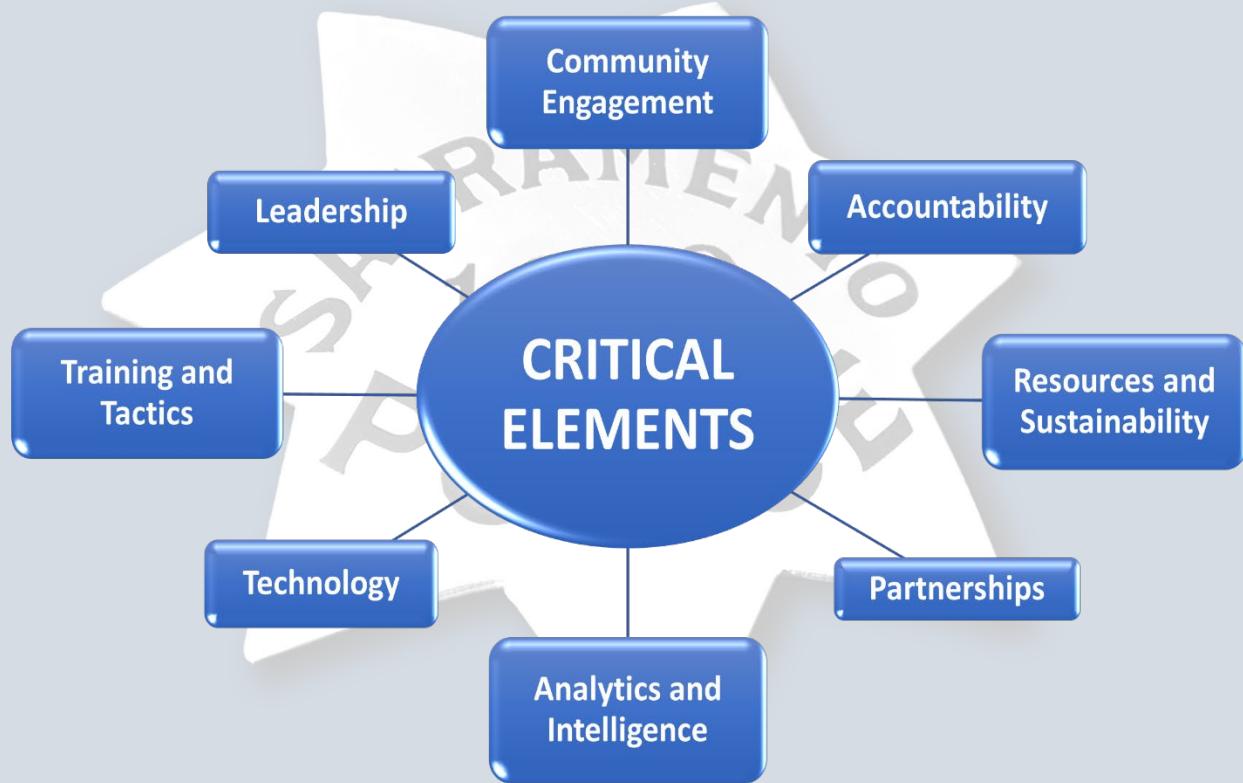
<sup>1</sup> *CSA Maps, CSA* According to 2019 CSA census estimates, The Greater Sacramento population is estimated to be 2.6 million. Greater Sacramento area is composed of seven counties, two metropolitan areas and one micropolitan area. El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo counties comprise the Sacramento–Roseville-Folsom, California Metropolitan Statistical Area. Nevada County comprises the Truckee-Grass Valley, Sutter and Yuba counties comprise the Yuba City Metropolitan Statistical Area.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/20/facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/>

<sup>3</sup> Ssentongo, P., Fronterre, C., Ssentongo, A.E. et al. Gun violence incidence during the COVID-19 pandemic is higher than before the pandemic in the United States. *Sci Rep* 11, 20654 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-98813-z>

## Framework

In 2018 the Major Cities Chiefs Association, in conjunction with the U.S Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Administration, published the *Violent Crime Reduction Operations Guide*. This document was a significant reference and guide used as the Sacramento Police Department formed this strategy. “Critical Elements,” including Community Engagement, Accountability, Resources and Sustainability, Training and Tactics, Analytics and Intelligence, Technology, Partnerships, and Leadership, were identified and considered throughout the development of this plan. The below table contains the department-specific analysis of these critical areas.



Department leadership conducted a series of analysis meetings to identify and customize this framework to align with our community’s needs and values. An assessment of resource deployment and refocusing of some personnel was also conducted. Through this analysis, a framework of 8 Violent Crime Reduction Principals emerged along with the road map of how we will implement them here in Sacramento.

The 8 principals of the Sacramento Police Department VCRS are:

**Community Engagement** – The first step of this crime intervention strategy must be in agreement with, and guided by, our community to ensure trust and legitimacy throughout the implementation. In partnership with community-based organizations, SPD will provide intervention and engagement with at-risk youth and other at-risk individuals in order to connect them with social services and family resources.

**Law Enforcement Partnerships** – We will coordinate, collaborate, and leverage relationships with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to reduce the rate of violent crimes in the City of Sacramento.

**Technology** – We will ensure that we are making best use of contemporary law enforcement technologies including digital forensics, gunshot detection and shooting data bases to focus efforts.

**Data and Analytics** – SPD will use data-driven approaches designed to foster long-term change. We will use this analytical methodology to identify and intervene with the most violent people and locations in the city. See below for detailed information.

**Training** – SPD will provide updated and comprehensive training in the investigation of violent crimes and the weapons used to perpetrate them. Additionally, SPD will continue to provide officer training in the areas of outreach pathways and trauma informed responses.

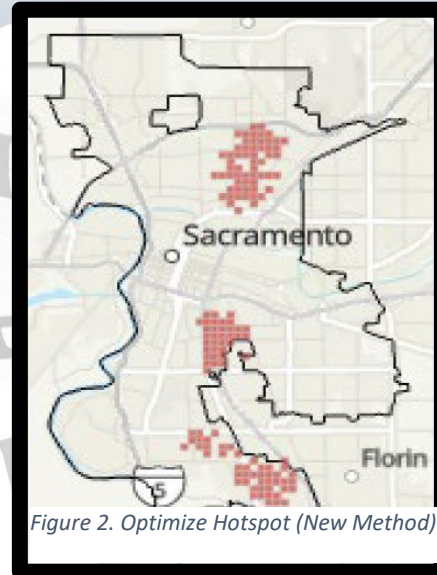
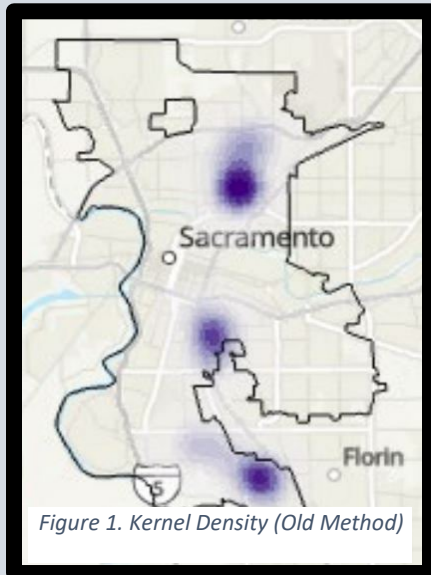
**Sustainability** – The most efficient use of resources and officers currently within the police department to reorganize and focus on violent crime without significant budget increases.

**Transparency and Accountability** – A thorough and transparent public reporting of efforts and the outcomes, to include both intended and unintended outcomes along with impacts on violent crime.

**Leadership** – A partnership between Department and community leadership to include ongoing, proactive, and honest communication and decision making. This strategy will include intentional efforts to assure that the employed strategy remains in line with our city's values and best serves the citizens of Sacramento.

## Initial Data Analysis

The first two essential questions are: where is violent crime happening, and who is perpetrating it? The Sacramento Police Department Crime Analysis Unit was tasked with producing and analyzing the latest violent crime statistics to help focus our effort. The first step was an update on how we looked at our data in order to determine where violent crime is occurring and who are the perpetrators of that crime. The first change was a transition from Kernel Density to Optimize Hotspot.



Hotspot site selection is crucial for violence prevention programs. Selecting sites based on a set of criteria improves the efficiency and effectiveness of program operations.<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, the crime analysis unit would identify hot spots using Kernel Density Estimation. Crime Analysts can identify where clusters of data points (gun crimes) exist with Kernel Density Estimation. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether these clusters are statistically significant.<sup>5</sup> Knowing that we wanted to identify statistically significant clusters, crime analysts utilized ESRI's Optimized Hot Spot Tool. The Optimized Hot Spot Tool considers a feature (each crime event) in the whole data set. In our case, the tool created a .05-mile grid over the city or roughly the same size as a city block. Each gun crime event is counted and aggregated in each grid area. The grids with high-value counts are considered statistically significant if other grids surround them with high-value counts.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.esri.com/about/newsroom/arcnews/crime-analysis-that-goes-beyond-dots-on-a-map/>

<sup>5</sup> Kalinic, Maja, Krisp, Jukka (2018) Kernel Density Estimation (KDE) vs. Hot-Spot Analysis Spot Analysis - Detecting Criminal Hot Spots in the in the City of San Francisco, [https://agile-online.org/conference\\_paper/cds/agile\\_2018/shortpapers/66%20Kernel%20Density%20Estimation%20\(KDE\)%20vs.%20Hot-Spot%20Analysis%20-%20Detecting%20Criminal%20Hot%20Spots%20in%20the%20City%20of%20San%20Francisco\\_UPDATE.pdf](https://agile-online.org/conference_paper/cds/agile_2018/shortpapers/66%20Kernel%20Density%20Estimation%20(KDE)%20vs.%20Hot-Spot%20Analysis%20-%20Detecting%20Criminal%20Hot%20Spots%20in%20the%20City%20of%20San%20Francisco_UPDATE.pdf)



Using this tool, Crime Analysis identified 140 statistically significant hot spot zones within the City of Sacramento, equating to approximately 7 square miles. A Kernel Density Estimation of the same data created an approximately 30 square mile area of significance. Analyzing the 945-gun crime incidents reported in 2021, Crime Analysis determined that 423 (44.7%) occurred within the hot spot zones. Additionally, of the 945 incidents, 839 were unique, meaning that every incident with multiple gun charges attached to it was only counted once. Of the 839 unique incidents, 379 (45.2%) were within the hot spot zones. In other words, 45.2% of all gun crime incidents are located within approximately 7 square miles of the city.

## **Focused Deterrence**

“Focused deterrence is a strategy to intervene with high-risk groups and individuals to prevent future crimes, primarily future violence.”<sup>6</sup> The Department had the Crime Analysis Unit use gun and violence-related offenses to understand who in our community is committing these crimes and what other associated indicators there may be to potentially predict who is at most risk for hurting someone in the future. In addition to the expected correlations, such as participating in a gang, carrying an illegal firearm, and negligent discharge, the Department found a strong relationship between domestic violence offenders and the propensity to commit other acts of violence.

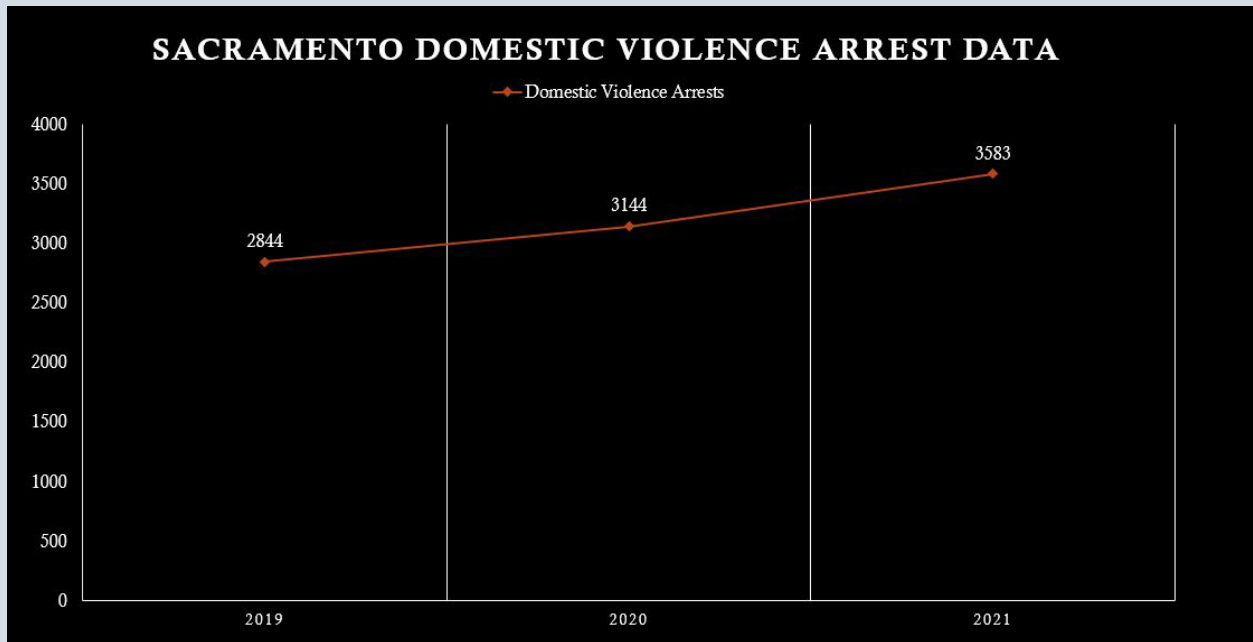
When an individual continues to commit acts of violence, our newly focused violent crime investigative staff will closely examine all cases associated with that individual, ensuring all appropriate charges and investigative information are communicated to the Sacramento County District Attorney’s Office. Ensuring proper bail is set and the case is directed to the most appropriate prosecutorial team is essential to the strategy.

Recent research published in *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law* found a strong association between firearms and domestic violence. In a 2021 report, Brady United conducted a study on domestic violence and firearms.<sup>7</sup> They found that nearly 60% of mass shootings are domestic violence related. This proved to be the case when the perpetrators of the tragic K Street mass shooting that occurred in Sacramento in April of 2022. Another notable example, the shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando that left 49 people dead, was perpetrated by a man who beat and strangled his ex-wife throughout their marriage. The Sutherland Springs church shooter, who murdered 26 people with his gun, had been previously charged with assaulting his wife and child. Nearly a quarter of all homicides in the US are domestic violence related, and over one-half involve firearms.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL261/better-policing-toolkit/all-strategies/focused-deterrence.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://brady-static.s3.amazonaws.com/Guns-Domestic-Violence.pdf>



In Sacramento, as of early July 2022, our department had already made 1565 arrests for domestic violence. As one can see from the historical data above, we are on pace to meet or exceed the number of arrests for domestic violence in our city in 2021. The Focused Deterrence model intersecting with our domestic violence offenders will help guide the department's efforts to prevent further violence. Focused deterrence has proven to be the best strategy to change the long-term behavior of high-risk offenders through a combination of deterrence/intervention, community intervention, providing alternatives to violence, and enforcement. It involves a combination of law enforcement, social services, and community mobilization. This strategy effectively reduces crime in places of elevated risk, reduces individuals' risk of involvement in serious crime, and improves relations with the community if done in partnership with communities.

Focused deterrence also allows us to be specific in implementing enforcement strategies. When partnering with resources for those at risk of becoming victims of, or engaging in violent criminal behavior, we can direct these services most effectively to those in need. That is why a supportive relationship between criminal justice partners, our Community-Based Organizations (CBO), and communities is critical for long-term success.

## Community Collaboration

The next critical step was to engage our community partners and share what we had learned from the analytical data. The goal was to solicit ideas, input and listen for both intended and unintended impacts of our planned strategy in the community. The first session was organized through the City of Sacramento Office of Violence Prevention, where several leaders from Community Based Organizations (CBO) were brought together and presented the data. The second step was for each Operations Area Command (North, Central, East, and South) to meet with their community leaders and groups to present the same information and solicit feedback. Out of these listening sessions, several themes emerged:

- a) There was a desire among community leaders to know more specific demographic information about violent crime offenders including age, race, and gang affiliation.
- b) It was important to community leaders that the police department maintained confidentiality with community member's information when they cooperate with the police.
- c) The community desired to have CBO members included with the development and implementation of a Crime Aftermath Linking & Mitigation (CALM) Team.
- d) Community leaders expressed interest in the continued innovation and use of technology to encourage the community to provide information to the police department (i.e. QR codes, Crime Stoppers, Department App, etc.).
- e) CBO's desired to proactively communicate and disrupt patterns of violence with focus deterrence individuals
- f) Community leaders suggested that the Police Department use a variety of venues to outreach and communicate with community members including youth sports events, in or around schools, holding town hall meetings, and organized in conjunction with neighborhood association meetings.

**IMPACT  
SAC**





Under the Police Department's Office of Violence Prevention, the bulk of the work will be focused on individual intervention. We are working to identify those that are gang affiliated or involved, have a history of violence, and others who are exposed to high-risk influences. We will be working with key populations from juveniles to, transitional-age youth, to adults. We know that we can prevent future crime by directing services and resources to youth and families in our community and that with the work of our community partners, we can help people find alternatives to a criminal lifestyle.

## **Implementation**

The specific first steps taken by the department will be as follows:

- Prevention and intervention efforts directed to identified individuals by the Community Advancement Division providing connections with community-based organizations as a pathway to housing, education, employment, and other social services.
- Focused investigative efforts towards individuals associated with a firearm crime. This will include an additional investigative review and consideration for federal or state vertical prosecution.
- ATF task force officer supplementation will serve as a multiplier in large-scale firearm and explosive crimes in our city and region, emphasizing illegal "ghost gun" seizures.
- Crime Analysis driven location and time intervention will help direct current operations staff to the areas in the city where violent crime most often occurs.
- Officers and Detectives will conduct active warrant enforcement, focused individual contact, and gun-related crime investigations. These will also include Privately Manufactured Firearm ("Ghost Guns") crimes which accounted for approximately a quarter of illegal firearm seizures last year within the City of Sacramento.
- Work to design and establish the Crime Aftermath Liaison and Mitigation (CALM) Team, which will be an interdisciplinary response team that deploys to a neighborhood a day after a crime of significant violence to connect community members with resources and reestablish a sense of public safety.

## **Performance Measures**

Transparent metrics and accountability are essential to implementing and adjusting this strategy to ensure the best possible outcomes. Some key components of assessing this strategy will be applying the Critical Decision-making<sup>iii</sup> Model to every strategy tactic, ensuring a legal, proportional, and equitable approach to reducing crime.

Second, monthly violent crime statistics will be produced, reanalyzed, and presented to the command staff to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of the strategy. They will make

any necessary adjustments. Third, area commanders will meet with and review the violent crime statistics as well as discuss community impacts every month with specific neighborhood community leaders. This critical feedback loop will also help the command staff adjust to the strategy's implantation. Finally, as the enforcement portion of this plan is implemented, we will carefully monitor complaints and misconduct accusations connected with this effort, in conjunction with and oversight of the Office of Public Safety Accountability, to mitigate any negative or disparate impacts from the implementation of this strategy.

## Summary

Urban violence is widely studied and resulted in strategies like Gun Violence Reduction Strategy and Hot Spots Policing. In general, what has been proven to be most effective in reducing urban violence is to focus attention and resources on dangerous people, places, and behaviors- the drivers of violence. In order for any strategy to work, it must be evidence-based and community-informed.

Evidence-based means we must form strategies and response based on the best evidence and data. As a result, this initial strategy is only a starting point, and the police department will continuously reevaluate and refine this plan to yield the best possible outcomes.

Community-informed means we must give a voice in the decision-making process to those most impacted by violence. These principles are in line with the tenants of procedural justice. The implementation of a strategy must be fair and give a voice to those impacted, be centered around respect for each one another, trust, and, finally, be transparent-which is why we will be sharing our data, successes, and challenges as we move forward.

The police department, the City, and the community are responsible for addressing violent crime collectively. We all must work together to stop violent crime from plaguing our community. The men and women of the Sacramento Police Department remain committed to trust, transparency, legitimacy, and community safety in the great City of Sacramento.

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/US/12-major-us-cities-top-annual-homicide-records/story?id=81466453>

<sup>ii</sup> EOY 2021 SPD Statistics

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.cityofsacramento.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/Police/Transparency/Education-and-Training/2021/2021-CPTs/Critical-Decision-making-Model-ECO.pdf>