

2025 CHARLES E. SHANNON COMMUNITY SAFETY INITIATIVE FITCHBURG/GARDNER

Funded Partners: City of Fitchburg Police Department, City of Gardner Police Department, Making Opportunity Count, Mount Wachusett Community College, Shining Light Ministries, Spanish American Center

Funded by the Office of Grants and Research, a state agency that is part of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, the Charles E. Shannon Community Safety Initiative (Shannon) is modeled after the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Comprehensive Gang Model. Shannon is a multi-sector approach used to address a community's gang and youth violence problem. Each community receiving Shannon funding demonstrates the presence of risk factors for youth and gang violence. Shannon participants must be between the ages of 10-24 years.

Strategies, Outcomes, and Funding Allocation

Total Funding: \$479,882.76*

Strategies	Outcomes		Funding Allocation
Case Management, Street Outreach, or Intervention	53 youth received case management services	45 goals of case management achieved	\$85,621.02
Community Mobilization	50 community members attended events, meetings, and presentations	2 community events, meetings, and presentations held	\$23,612.40
Education & Employment	142 youth participated in an education program	52 youth participated in an employment program	\$121,642.03
Positive Youth Development & Recreation	175 youth participated in a recreation program	165 youth participated in youth development programs	\$139,933.06
Suppression	33 hotspot patrols completed	25 law enforcement home visits	\$74,674.26

*In 2025, \$34,400.00 was allocated to administrative/other costs for the site.

Youth Risk Assessments

- 56% **LOW-RISK*** Youth in danger of engaging in risky behavior or gang activity.
- 41% **MODERATE-RISK*** Youth exposed to the same risk factors as low-risk youth, as well as additional risk factors such as truancy.
- 3% **HIGH-RISK*** Youth who are perpetrators or victims of shooting or stabbing violence, and/or are known gang members.

* % of youth assessed for risk

Success Highlight

"A 15-year-old student had been struggling with explosive outbursts, truancy, and poor decisions. This student also had major distrust of the police. After participating in the DARE program, our SRO noticed that the student showed improvements. She now uses de-escalation strategies learned in DARE when she is experiencing challenges and attends school more consistently. Additionally, relationships she built with police through our program have led her to trust law enforcement more."

~ City of Gardner Police Department

Community Risk Factors

Massachusetts Fitchburg Gardner

Total Population (2025 Estimate)	7,154,084	42,145	21,381
Population Lives in Poverty (2020-2024)	9.7%	15.6%	13.7%
Unemployment Rate (2025)	4.8%	6.2%	6.0%
Total School Population (2024-2025)	948,709	6,601	2,470
Low-Income (2025-2026)	41.1%	69.7%	60.6%
High School Dropout Rate (2023-2024)	2.0%	2.1%	2.9%

Sources: www.census.gov/quickfacts; profiles.doe.mass.edu; <https://lmi.dua.eol.mass.gov/LMI/LaborForceAndUnemployment#>

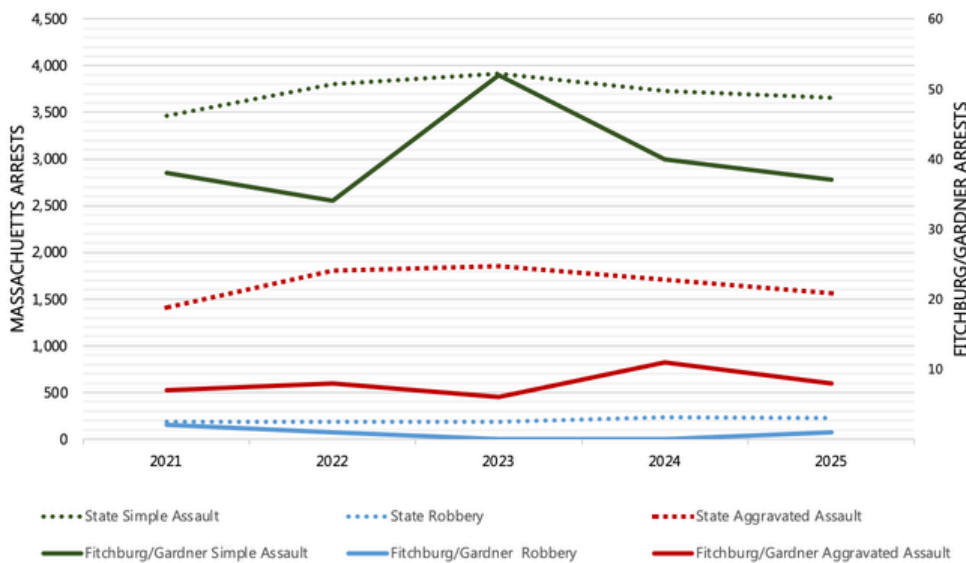
Gang Activity in Fitchburg/Gardner

8
Street Gangs

36 Estimated Gang
Members
Between the Ages of
10-24

Gang-related violence, gun crime, juvenile offending, and narcotics activity continue to present persistent challenges for police departments. A relatively small group of highly active offenders account for a disproportionate share of these incidents, underscoring the concentrated nature of crime. Although many offenses are reported, a substantial number of serious gang-related crimes remain unreported due to fear of retaliation and concerns about exposure to law enforcement. The issue is not confined to any single group; rather, Fitchburg is home to a diverse array of gangs, including nationally recognized organizations such as the Almighty Latin Kings and Queens, Vice Lords, Bloods, as well as various local street gangs.

5-Year Trends in Youth Arrests (ages 10-24), 2021-2025



Changes in Youth Arrests for Simple Assault, Robbery, and Aggravated Assault

Arrests for simple assaults from 2021-2025 in...

- Massachusetts increased 5%
- Fitchburg/Gardner decreased 3%

Arrests for robberies from 2021-2025 in...

- Massachusetts increased 20%
- Fitchburg/Gardner decreased 50%

Arrests for aggravated assaults from 2021-2025 in....

- Massachusetts increased 11%
- Fitchburg/Gardner increased 14%

Source: National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

Further analytical work is needed to make an association between Shannon programming and changes in arrest trends in focal communities.

Information contained in this report is from funding applications, reports supplied by the site, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, US Census, MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, and Office of Grants and Research / Research Policy and Analysis Division. Special thanks to the Statewide Research Partner, Northeastern University, and the Crime and Justice Policy Lab of the University of Pennsylvania, for preparing this brief.