

Response to Campaign Zero Claims

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CLAIM #1:

ShotSpotter does not reduce gun violence.

ANSWER:

Wrong expectation.

No technology or single tool can prevent gun violence – gunfire detection and location, body cams, 9-1-1, license plate readers, or anything else. Gun violence is an enormously complex and long-tenured problem and to expect a singular solution is disingenuous at best.

What gunshot detection technology has proven to remedy is the chronic underreporting of criminal gunfire. An important fact that most people do not know is that [80-90% of gunfire goes unreported](#) via the traditional 9-1-1 system. This fact has been independently researched and documented by Brookings Institute among many others and is the collective experience of over 160 cities where ShotSpotter is deployed.

ShotSpotter fills that gap to provide real-time and precise digital alerts to virtually all gunfire in its coverage area.

This critical awareness provides at least 3 important public safety benefits:

1. Lives saved.

- ShotSpotter has led police to hundreds of gunshot-wound victims with no corresponding 9-1-1 call, enabling them to bring care to victims who may otherwise not receive the aid they need, resulting in hundreds of lives saved in [Oakland](#), [Chicago](#), [Albuquerque](#), [Pittsburgh](#), and more than 160 cities across the country where ShotSpotter is deployed.

2. Increased collection of ballistic evidence and improved investigations.

- [Research shows that ShotSpotter improves evidence collection](#) by officers responding to shooting incidents. According to the [Urban Institute](#), police agencies using ShotSpotter have a rate of finding shell casings that is up to three times higher than those who do not, due to the precise location provided by ShotSpotter alerts. These shell casings processed through NIBIN can connect shooting incidents to the crime gun and ultimately the shooter.

3. Data and response inform intervention strategies and build community trust.

- The accumulation of gunfire incident data over time can help law enforcement better understand and strategize against gun violence patterns, leading to more effective policing strategies and increased community engagement.
- When communities see police and first responders show up – because they are notified – to gunfire incidents, it builds trust that safety in their neighborhoods matter. The many residents who are victimized by the few serial trigger-pullers deserve a response to gunfire just as much as any other residents expect and deserve appropriate police response when in need.

ShotSpotter helps drive positive outcomes:

- [An independent study](#) by the NYU Policing Project and a Purdue University social scientist found that eight police beats in St. Louis County, with ShotSpotter, saw a 30% decrease in gun-related assaults, compared to eight other police beats without ShotSpotter.
- [An independent study](#) by the Center For Crime Science and Violence Prevention in Winston Salem, N.C. showed that the deployment of ShotSpotter resulted in a 26% decrease in aggravated

assaults in the community. Comparable area and overall city numbers in Winston-Salem indicated an increase in aggravated assaults during the same period.

- Southern Illinois University [conducted a study in Cincinnati](#) that showed a 46% reduction in aggravated assaults with firearms in ShotSpotter coverage areas compared to control areas without ShotSpotter, from the pre-deployment period before late 2017 to the post-deployment period after ShotSpotter was initially implemented in late 2017.

CLAIM #2:

ShotSpotter techs often mistake loud noises for gunshots.

ANSWER:

Not true.

While the ShotSpotter system detects many loud, impulsive sounds, sophisticated technology and machine learning algorithms filter out sounds that are not likely to be gunfire. Those non-gunfire sounds are not published to customers as gunfire.

ShotSpotter technology has a 97% accuracy rate for detections across all customers, nationwide, for the last 4 years. [Edgeworth Analytics](#).

Over 160 cities rely on the ShotSpotter technology to detect and alert law enforcement to instances of gunfire. With patented technology and highly trained human reviewers who can replay the sound, look at the direction of sensor participation, and analyze the audio waveform, the ShotSpotter system is highly accurate at distinguishing gunfire from other bangs, booms, and pops.

ShotSpotter maintains a high accuracy rate and extremely low false positive rate, at just 0.5% across all customers in the last four years. [Edgeworth Analytics](#). ShotSpotter's accuracy allows police to coordinate safe and efficient responses that require fewer resources in a way that improves community trust.

CLAIM #3:

ShotSpotter leads to more police encounters with civilians, sometimes resulting in fatal outcomes.

ANSWER:

There is no evidence to support this claim.

ShotSpotter provides intelligence and situational awareness that allows police to coordinate safe, efficient, and equitable responses that require fewer resources in a way that builds community trust.

When ShotSpotter alerts police to gunfire, officers are given more information and context about the incident than they would have without ShotSpotter. This information allows for a safer and more equitable response.

ShotSpotter alerts allow police to respond to and investigate a gunfire incident in a precise geographical area, compared to a 9-1-1 call (when they do occur). 9-1-1 calls that often result in officers randomly patrolling neighborhoods in search of victims and evidence.

CLAIM #4:

SoundThinking's Incident Review Center Specialists lack required specialized training, certification, and legal protocol compliance when compared to the stringent qualifications mandated for forensic practitioners in areas like breathalyzer operation, firearm analysis, and fingerprinting.

ANSWER:

Not true.

SoundThinking's Incident Review Center Reviewers are acoustic specialists who have successfully completed a two-month-long certification training, requiring each to detect gunfire with 99% accuracy. SoundThinking regularly monitors its employees' performance and provides additional training when needed.

CLAIM #5:

ShotSpotter has never published results from validation testing.

ANSWER:

Not true.

In terms of published results, ShotSpotter technology has a 97% accuracy rate for detections across all police department customers nationwide. This statistic has been independently verified and published by data analytics firm [Edgeworth Analytics](#).

ShotSpotter also has a 99% customer retention rate, indicating that the system works very well.

SoundThinking relies on customers to ultimately determine the value of and satisfaction with ShotSpotter's performance.

CLAIM #6:

Edgeworth's independent audit of ShotSpotter is unreliable because the data upon which it relies is from clients reporting potential errors to ShotSpotter. For example, over six months in 2021, the City of Chicago did not report false positives back to SoundThinking.

ANSWER:

Not true.

It is standard practice for agencies to notify SoundThinking of false positives and false negatives rather than confirm ShotSpotter alerts - and the company encourages customers to provide this feedback so that the company can continue to improve its technology.

Contractually, SoundThinking's agreements with ShotSpotter clients guarantee at least 90% accuracy based on the number of (1) false positives and false negatives divided by (2) the total number of alerts plus false negatives. Police agencies are therefore incentivized to report false positives and false negatives to SoundThinking - if the company does not satisfy the 90% accuracy figure, customer fees go down.

CLAIM #7:

SoundThinking is not contractually liable for false alerts.

ANSWER:

Absolutely false.

Contractually, agreements with clients for ShotSpotter guarantee at least a 90% accuracy rate. This is based on the number of false positives and false negatives divided by the total number of alerts, plus false negatives.

Police agencies are therefore incentivized to report false positives and false negatives to SoundThinking - if the 90% accuracy figure is not met, customer fees go down.

CLAIM #8:

ShotSpotter slows 9-1-1 response for residents seeking support.

ANSWER:

Not true.

This claim reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the real-world implications of what happens operationally when an agency deploys gunshot detection.

Upon implementing such systems, law enforcement agencies often uncover a dramatic rise in the number of gunfire incidents. It's important to note that an estimated [80-90% of gunfire events go unreported](#) to 9-1-1. This revelation results in an increase in the demand for law enforcement and first responder services.

It's also essential to recognize that not all 9-1-1 calls involve situations as critical as gunfire. Calls reporting lower-priority incidents are triaged accordingly to ensure that the most critical situations, like active gunfire, receive the prompt and focused response they require. This approach ensures that resources are allocated effectively, prioritizing the preservation of life above all.

ShotSpotter has been shown to significantly decrease response times in coverage areas across the country.

For example, [independent research by the Center for Crime Science and Violence Prevention](#) in the Winston-Salem market showed that police response times to ShotSpotter alerts were almost 5 minutes faster compared to those called in by residents.

According to a this [article in The Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery](#), ShotSpotter alerts decrease police and EMS response times by more than 30%, getting first responders to the scene to identify and assist gunshot victims who may otherwise not receive life-saving help.

CLAIM #9:

ShotSpotter cannot be relied on for evidence and is rarely used in court.

ANSWER:

Absolutely false.

ShotSpotter forensic data has been used as evidence in over 300 court cases in 24 states and has prevailed in dozens of Frye and Daubert challenges. The data provides precise details as to where, when, and how the shooting occurred and is utilized by both prosecutorial and defense teams to gain a better understanding of key events that are critical to the pursuit of justice.

For example, just last year, [a federal judge in Mobile, Alabama sided with prosecutors](#) in a 2023 case involving the use of ShotSpotter technology, upholding the arrest of a convicted felon in possession of a firearm.

CLAIM #10:

ShotSpotter doesn't save lives.

ANSWER:

Wrong, wrong and wrong again.

ShotSpotter's main value is in the lives saved.

ShotSpotter has alerted police to hundreds upon hundreds of gunshot-wound victims with no corresponding 9-1-1 call, enabling them to bring care to victims who may otherwise not receive aid.

Make that claim to the [13-year-old boy shot in the back and abdomen](#) in Chicago. Officers responded to a ShotSpotter alert and immediately put the boy in the squad car and drove him to the hospital.

Make that claim to [Joshua Junior Carter](#), who was found after a ShotSpotter alert in Winston-Salem after suffering a gunshot wound.

Make that claim to hundreds of other victims:

- [Oakland police](#) reported that in 2020 they were able to find and coordinate immediate medical response to 101 surviving victims, with a vast majority (how many?) of these incidents not accompanied by a corresponding 9-1-1 call.
- In 2021, [Chicago Police Department credited ShotSpotter alerts with 125 lives saved](#) over the preceding five years. More recently (Feb 2024) Noe Flores, Data Analyst for CPD, testified that ShotSpotter led to over 400 victims in the last five years.
- Pittsburgh [announced that ShotSpotter was the only reporting mechanism to first responders](#) for 13 shooting victims whose lives they saved in a two-year span.
- In 2022, [Albuquerque Police Department reported](#) finding and coordinating an emergency medical response for 179 gunshot wound victims in less than 11 months as a result of responding to ShotSpotter alerts.
- West Palm Beach, FL was recognized by the US Conference of Mayors for its partnership with ShotSpotter to [save the lives of its residents](#).

CLAIM #11:

ShotSpotter increases and heightens police interactions – e.g. Chicago’s Inspector General found ShotSpotter changes the way police “perceive and interact” with citizens.

ANSWER:

Totally untrue.

When ShotSpotter alerts police to gunfire, those officers are given more information about the incident than they would have without ShotSpotter. This information allows for a safer and more equitable response.

ShotSpotter enables a fast, precise police response that ultimately helps save lives and collect critical evidence. **There is zero data supporting the claim that ShotSpotter puts police on high alert or creates dangerous situations.** Rather, ShotSpotter equips police officers with more information than they might typically have when arriving at the scene of a gunshot incident, and they arrive at the scene more situationally aware.

CLAIM #12:

Addressing gun violence means choosing between ShotSpotter and violence prevention programming.

ANSWER:

Absolutely not.

The notion that addressing gun violence requires choosing between technology tools and violence interruption and prevention is an alarming misconception. You need both.

Cities need ShotSpotter to know when and where criminal gunfire occurs so first responders can react quickly and render aid to victims as needed and save lives.

Further investment in violence interruption is also recommended.

[SoundThinking’s Data for Good Program](#), for example, helps law enforcement customers identify offices of violence prevention, schools, city and county public health departments and other community organizations that would receive gunfire data and analytics including heatmaps and dashboards. These tools indicate where gunfire and potential trauma may be occurring so the appropriate community resources can be deployed to offer immediate and lasting support and help address the core issues that drive crime.

Community organizations that utilize SoundThinking technology and data to help prevent violence and deploy social, health and economic resources to their communities include Miami-Dade County’s Walking One Stop, Mobile, Alabama’s Operation Echo Stop and Baltimore’s Office of Neighborhood Safety.

CLAIM #13:

ShotSpotter causes disproportionate harm to black and brown communities.

ANSWER:

False – it’s the opposite.

Race and/or demographics are not considered when deploying ShotSpotter’s system. ShotSpotter deployments are based on objective historical crime data, with some influence of elected officials who want to protect their communities.

All residents who live in communities experiencing persistent gunfire deserve a rapid police response, which gunshot detection enables regardless of race or geographic location.

CLAIM #14:

ShotSpotter increases a city’s financial and legal liability, as evidenced by the lawsuit associated with the arrest of Michael Williams.

ANSWER:

Nope.

There is no evidence to support this claim. Court records from the case prove that ShotSpotter did not change the location of the gunfire between its real-time alert on the night of the shooting and its later detailed forensic report. **Publishers that initially reported this false information, such as AP and Vice have retracted this claim.**

SoundThinking has never and will never, manipulate incident data.

CLAIM #15:

ShotSpotter manufacturers probable cause.

ANSWER:

Fabricated.

SoundThinking does not control tactics employed by police agencies and certainly does not condone any unconstitutional or illegal tactics.

While SoundThinking has no ability to monitor or dictate the methods or tactics of any department, the data from a ShotSpotter alert allows police to report to and investigate a gunfire incident in a more precise area, compared to a 9-1-1 call. These 9-1-1 calls often require officers to patrol entire neighborhoods for victims and evidence.

Fundamentally, ShotSpotter’s precise alerts reduce the risk of unnecessary stops and searches.

CLAIM #16:

Data shows that among those individuals arrested for a violent crime following a ShotSpotter alert, 55% were found not guilty or their case was dismissed.

ANSWER:

Wrong metric.

No technology or single tool can prevent gun violence – not gunfire detection, body cams, 9-1-1, license plate readers, or anything else. Gun violence is an enormously complex and long-tenured problem and to expect a singular solution is disingenuous at best.

Consequently, this metric is not a full measure of value.

That being said, ShotSpotter forensic data has been used as evidence in over 300 court cases in 24 states and has prevailed in dozens of Frye and Daubert challenges. The data provides precise details as to where, when, and how the shooting occurred and is utilized by both prosecutorial and defense teams to gain a better understanding of key events that are critical to the pursuit of justice.

Lastly, SoundThinking is not familiar with this research, source, or data. And if it is accurate, what about the 45%? What kind of offenders have been removed from the streets?

CLAIM #17:

Data shows that police do not find evidence on 80-99% of ShotSpotter alerts.

ANSWER:

Wrong question to ask, but this is still not accurate.

It has been shown that ShotSpotter [improves evidence collection](#) by responding officers to shooting incidents.

[According to the Urban Institute](#), police agencies using ShotSpotter have a rate of finding shell casings that is **up to three times higher** due to the precise location provided by ShotSpotter alerts.

Shell casings are critical evidence in an investigation that can be used to identify the gun that was fired, and ultimately identify and prosecute a suspect.

CLAIM #18:

Because the ATF's National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) system only allows investigators to track firearms — not the person using the gun — recovering shell casings is akin to officers “picking up trash” according to Houston City Council Member Mike Knox, because

as evidence shell casings provide “no actionable intelligence” and are “useless in court.”

ANSWER:

Nothing could be further from the truth.

While NIBIN does not directly identify the individual who fired a gun, it allows law enforcement to connect separate shooting incidents by matching spent cartridge casings to the same firearm. This capability is invaluable for linking seemingly unrelated crimes, establishing patterns, and developing investigative leads to identify suspects.

Moreover, ballistic evidence is far from "useless in court." Testimony from firearms examiners comparing ballistic markings on recovered cartridge casings to confiscated weapons is routinely used to secure convictions, especially in cases where there are no eyewitnesses or where perpetrators refuse to cooperate with investigators.

Suggesting that recovering shell casings from crime scenes amounts to merely "picking up trash" dangerously trivializes the investigative process and ignores the painstaking forensic work required to analyze and interpret ballistic evidence. In many cases, this evidence is critical for taking violent criminals off the streets, maintaining public safety and ultimately, saving lives.

To our knowledge, Mr. Knox is not an expert on the investigative process.

CLAIM #19:

In a study of 68 large metropolitan U.S. counties, ShotSpotter did not have a significant impact on gun-related homicides or arrests outcomes.

ANSWER:

Again, wrong question to ask, but still inaccurate.

[The Journal of Urban Healthy Study](#), the source of this claim, has some significant procedural flaws.

In this case, the study considered data from **across entire counties**, whereas ShotSpotter coverage areas typically **only cover a small portion of counties**. Because ShotSpotter sensors do not detect and report gunfire incidents outside the coverage area where they are deployed, the system would not be able to alert law enforcement to incidents in most of the geographic areas that were analyzed in this study. For example, just 3.1% of St. Louis County is in the ShotSpotter coverage area, making findings across the entire county inapplicable to ShotSpotter’s technology.

Net/net – these results are not credible and need to be dismissed.

CLAIM #20:

The significant underreporting of gunshots to 9-1-1 is misleading because it assumes every alert is a gunshot, which isn’t true. Also,

gunshots separated by 9 seconds count as separate events, whereas a 9-1-1 caller would only call once.

ANSWER:

This is so wrong.

In reality, **virtually every ShotSpotter alert actually is a gunshot** as evidenced by ShotSpotter's 97% accuracy rate across all police agency customers nationwide for the last 4 years.

Additionally, the fact that a 9-1-1 caller would only call once, in an incident that may or may not be related to the same shooting, serves as evidence of ShotSpotter's ability to provide superior situational awareness.

With ShotSpotter alerts, a police officer is provided more information about a gunshot incident, and information equates to preparation and better responses. For example, ShotSpotter technology can inform police officers if there are multiple shots fired, multiple shooters, and even fully automatic gunfire.

CLAIM #21:

ShotSpotter frequently denies (or does not easily provide) access to audio files, the name of the IRC analyst involved in the alert, witness services/ testimony, or forensic reports.

AND

CLAIM #22:

Rather than honor subpoenas for evidence, SoundThinking would rather be held in contempt of court.

ANSWER:

This is so wrong.

SoundThinking consistently and transparently responds to subpoenas seeking facts about alerts provided to law enforcement in courts across the country. That includes providing information about methodology.

In the case of People v. Jones, however, the Chicago Public Defender's Office was seeking information from SoundThinking that had no bearing on the case at hand and was beyond anything pertinent that alert data could provide.

In this case, Mr. Jones was arrested for drunk driving. The only connection between his arrest and SoundThinking was that police were traveling to a ShotSpotter alert location and, on the way, saw Mr. Jones driving erratically, leading to his arrest. SoundThinking's only role, in this case, was that an alert had caused the police to drive past Mr. Jones while traveling to an alert location. The police saw Mr. Jones before arriving at the ShotSpotter alert area.

Notwithstanding these facts, the Deputy Public Defender issued a sweeping subpoena. SoundThinking readily provided certain information without challenge. SoundThinking informed the court that additional information being sought was unwarranted, inappropriate, costly to produce, and, in any event, irrelevant to the case. The court disagreed, despite the undisputed facts, and ordered extensive discovery. SoundThinking has appealed the decision.

CLAIM #23:

In Durham, NC, from December 2022-2023, a study showed that 9-1-1 outperformed ShotSpotter in alerting police to gunshots and attending to victims.

ANSWER:

Nope.

This is inaccurate and misleading and is not supported by the evidence of the Duke study.

Critically, the report does not distinguish between indoor and outdoor gunfire, even though that fact is noted in the research. ShotSpotter is designed and warranted for outdoor gunfire detection only and is not intended to generate evidence related to indoor shootings.

Considering this, the study's co-mingled data invalidates its conclusions regarding ShotSpotter performance.

The reality is that during its 12-month implementation, ShotSpotter contributed to several positive public safety outcomes:

Over 12 months, ShotSpotter technology detected 5,259 gunshots across 1,416 alerts, leading police to make [24 arrests](#) and [likely saved a life](#). Additionally, nearly **80% of the shooting reports were initiated by ShotSpotter rather than traditional 9-1-1 calls**, an outcome that Police Chief Patrice Andrews, [described as "significant"](#).

CLAIM #24:

In Chicago, IL, from January 2021-May 2021, out of more than 50,000 alerts, ShotSpotter led police to recover a weapon on 0.30% of responses and make an arrest out of 0.49% of responses.

ANSWER:

Bad analysis.

The OIG report suffered from incomplete and irreconcilable data, a fact that it acknowledged explicitly. Consequently, [the OIG concluded](#) "it may not be possible at present to reach a well-informed determination as to whether ShotSpotter is a worthwhile operational investment as an effective law enforcement tool for the City and CPD."

Nonetheless, this report has often been cited by critics to characterize ShotSpotter as ineffective. There are two main mistakes with this characterization:

1. First, it rests on a flawed assumption that ShotSpotter produces a high number of “false” alerts.
2. Second, it presents a misleading interpretation of those alerts that the OIG could link to gun-related criminal evidence.

SoundThinking asserts that a ShotSpotter alert is, itself, digital evidence that gunfire occurred — with the specific location, a precise timestamp, an audio recording, and other forensic elements as part of the digital evidence. The OIG report focuses, instead, on the percentage of ShotSpotter alerts where police did not find “physical evidence” or a witness willing to corroborate the digital evidence made available to CPD via the ShotSpotter service. But in fact, CPD becomes a virtual witness to gunfire with its access to the audio recording and other pertinent data listed above.

More importantly, the OIG Report failed to provide context to the 4,556 incidents that did have dispositions indicating physical evidence of a gun crime was found. For instance, SoundThinking’s analysis of ShotSpotter and publicly available OEMC data for this same period reveals:

- ShotSpotter alerted CPD to over 800 more gunshot wound victims than were reported to 9-1-1.
- ShotSpotter alerted CPD to almost 1,700 more instances of illegal use of a firearm than were reported to 9-1-1.
- ShotSpotter alerted CPD to over 150 additional homicides than were reported to 9-1-1.

CLAIM #25:

ShotSpotter owns the data and does not allow customers to share it with outside groups, because “the company wants to reserve the option to sell the data,” according to a company representative in an NBC interview.

ANSWER:

Nope.

While SoundThinking contractually owns the vast majority of gunfire data it collects, the company encourages police agencies to share gunfire alert data and its impact with the public city councils and the media. In fact, every day, police agencies across the country tweet about gunfire alerts that lead to arrests and/or victims, and the media publishes items about them.

Ultimately, releasing locale-specific information is at the discretion and under the control of each police department and not SoundThinking.

At the same time, SoundThinking’s contracts allow the company to share, license, or sell gunfire alert data in aggregated form to third parties expressly for research, analytical, law enforcement, or security purposes. “Aggregated data” means gunfire alert data that does not include the precise time or location of a gunfire incident and, as always, is not tied to any individual, as ShotSpotter’s system does not capture such information. SoundThinking does not release, sell, license, or otherwise share its gunfire alert data to insurance companies or companies that perform research on behalf of insurance companies.

Appendix: About Campaign Zero

Organization Background “CancelShotSpotter” and “Campaign Zero” fall under the umbrella of “We the Protesters, Inc.” a non-profit organization which was founded in August 2014 by DeRay McKesson and Johnetta Elzie following the controversial police-shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO. They’ve undertaken a number of projects, including campaigns “#8CantWait”, “Police Use of Force Project”, “Cops Kill Kids”, and “Out of the Streets Fascist Police” among others. Putting aside some of those controversial signs that may encourage violence against police, the organization has also been criticized by some academics for the misuse of misrepresentation of data to support their narrative. A more comprehensive [overview can be found here](#).

Campaign Zero In 2021, a number of the co-founders of Campaign Zero left the organization, accusing DeRay McKesson of [infringing on their intellectual property and improper use of funds](#).

Financials As a non-profit organization, “We the Protesters, Inc.” files IRS form 990 (tax ID: 81-3764408).

A review of those forms revealed the following:

2020 – Received contributions totaling \$42M

2021 – Received additional contributions totaling \$3M

2021 – Net assets were just under \$38M

2021 Total Annual Compensation for Deray McKesson (Executive Director) is about \$212K.

Other significant expenses:

- Legal Consulting: *Loeb & Loeb LLP* - \$527K
- Polling and Focus Group Consulting: *Yougov America* - \$176K
- Strategic Communications and Crisis Management: *10th Avenue Consulting* - \$120K
- Advertising and Promotions: \$259K
- Employee Salaries: \$220K

Sources:

https://apps.irs.gov/pub/epostcard/cor/813764408_202112_990_2023050921190103.pdf

<https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/details>