

Indianapolis, Indiana **GUN VIOLENCE PROBLEM ANALYSIS**

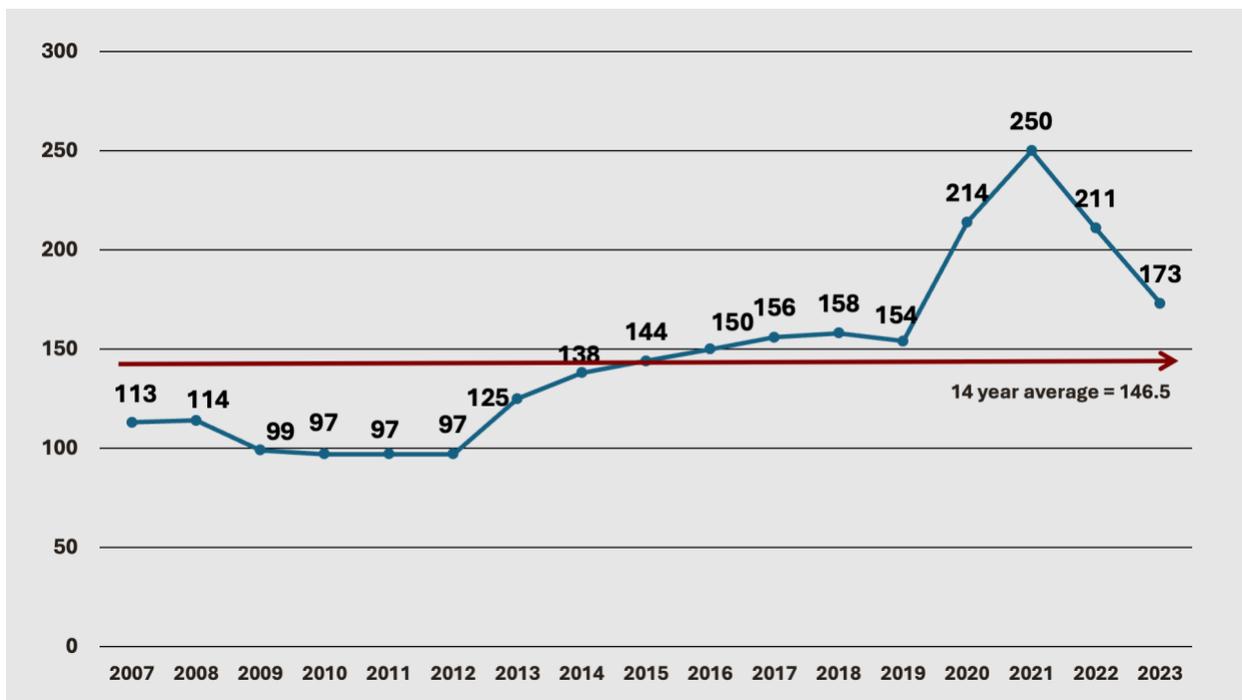
Summary Report | January 2022 – December 2023

Indianapolis Gun Violence Problem Analysis Summary Report

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) partnered with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) and the Indianapolis Office of Public Health and Safety to conduct this detailed analysis of shootings and homicides in Indianapolis. A Gun Violence Problem Analysis (GVPA) is a set of analytical exercises designed to support the implementation of violence reduction strategies; the GVPA is a research-based methodology used in several cities nationally.

The average homicide rate in Indianapolis from 2010-2023 was 21.5 per 100,000 population. Comparatively, the average national homicide rate during the same period was 5.5 per 100,000 population. Like many cities in the US, Indianapolis experienced an increase in violence with the onset of COVID-19 pandemic but has since experienced three and a half years of consecutive decline, which reduced to below pre-COVID rates in 2023.

Figure 1. Indianapolis Annual Criminal Homicides (2007-2023)



This analysis examines all homicides in Indianapolis in the two-year period from January 2022 to December 2023 (n=393) and all nonfatal injury shootings in the one-year period between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023 (n=521). The 393 homicides involved 597 unique victims or identified suspects, and the 521 shootings involved 813 unique identified victims or suspects.

This analysis examines the characteristics of these incidents and the individuals involved, including demographics and criminal justice system involvement. This analysis also includes information on groups and social networks at high risk of involvement in violence and the geographic concentration of violence throughout the city.¹

Before summarizing these findings, it is important to define several terms used throughout this report:

- **Homicide:** In this report, “homicide” refers to criminal homicides in which a killing was intentional or due to criminal negligence (i.e., murder).
- **Nonfatal Shooting:** In this report, “nonfatal shooting” refers to shooting incidents involving criminal intent in which a victim was struck and injured by a firearm.
- **Community Supervision:** In this report, “community supervision” refers to the supervision of someone convicted of an offense and placed on correctional supervision, in Indiana that is one of three types: probation, community corrections, or parole.
- **Group:** In this report, “group” refers to the wide range of dynamics and structures present in criminally active street groups. Individuals at high risk for violence are likely to associate within particular groups and social networks, ranging from more highly organized, formal gangs to more loosely associated, informal neighborhood crews.
- **Suspect:** In this report, “suspect” refers to a person arrested and a person of interest for a shooting or homicide.

Suspects and Victims in Homicides and Shootings

Despite popular opinion that gun violence is driven by youth, the average age of suspects and victims of homicides and nonfatal shootings in Indianapolis ranged from 27-32 years old, with the majority in all groups being between the ages of 18-34 (Table 1). Less than 10% of homicide suspects and less than 12% of non-fatal shooting suspects were juveniles.

While Indianapolis has a largely White population and is slightly more than 50% female, those involved in gun violence were primarily Black men (Table 2 and Table 3). Suspects and victims of homicides in Indianapolis are primarily male (85.59%) and Black (80.93%), as were suspects and victims of nonfatal shootings (81.67% male and 75.87% Black, respectively).

¹ An overview of data and methodology is provided near the end of this report.

Table 1. Homicide and Nonfatal Shooting Suspects and Victims: Age

Age Range	Homicides			Nonfatal Shootings		
	Suspects (n=235)	Victims (n=392)	Victims & Suspects (n=627)	Suspects (n=268)	Victims (n=613)	Victims & Suspects (n=881)
17 and under	9.79%	10.20%	10.05%	11.90%	10.91%	11.24%
18-24	41.70%	28.32%	33.33%	36.80%	32.41%	33.83%
25-34	28.51%	24.74%	26.16%	30.86%	26.55%	27.92%
35-44	12.77%	16.07%	14.83%	13.01%	18.08%	16.57%
45-54	3.83%	10.97%	8.29%	6.32%	6.51%	6.47%
55 and older	3.40%	9.69%	7.34%	1.12%	5.54%	4.20%
Mean Age	27.74	32.23	30.55	27.22	29.74	28.97

Table 2. Homicide and Nonfatal Shooting Suspects and Victims: Sex

Sex	Homicides			Nonfatal Shootings			Indianapolis Population
	Suspects (n=204)	Victims (n=393)	Victims & Suspects (n=597)	Suspects (n=200)	Victims (n=613)	Victims & Suspects (n=813)	
Female	7.84%	17.81%	14.41%	12.50%	20.23%	18.33%	51.4%
Male	92.16%	82.19%	85.59%	87.50%	79.77%	81.67%	48.6%

Table 3. Homicide and Nonfatal Shooting Suspects and Victims: Race

Race	Homicides			Nonfatal Shootings			Indianapolis Population
	Suspects (n=198)	Victims (n=392)	Victims & Suspects (n=590)	Suspects (n=193)	Victims (n=611)	Victims & Suspects (n=804)	
Asian	-	1.28%	0.84%	0.52%	1.15%	1.00%	4.1%
Black	82.50%	74.23%	77.03%	80.31%	74.47%	75.87%	28.1%
Latino	4.50%	1.53%	2.53%	2.07%	1.96%	1.99%	13.3%
White	13.00%	22.96%	19.59%	17.10%	21.93%	20.77%	53.6%
Other	-	-	-	-	0.49%	0.37%	0.5%

Criminal Justice Involvement

As it relates to criminal justice involvement, 69% of homicide suspects and 57% of victims were known to the criminal justice system prior to the incident. Approximately half (49.71% of suspects and 51.11% of victims) had been previously incarcerated, while smaller numbers had been on community supervision at the time of the incident (15.20% and 9.33%, respectively). Thirty-eight percent of shooting suspects and 56% of shooting victims were known to the criminal justice system prior to the incident (Table 4).

The number of previous arrests is very likely to be a significant undercount given IMPD was not able to provide data prior to 2019.

Table 4. Homicide and Nonfatal Shooting Suspects and Victims: Prior Criminal Justice History ²

Of those known to the CJ system	Homicides			Nonfatal Shootings		
	Suspects	Victims	Victims & Suspects	Suspects	Victims	Victims & Suspects
Known to CJ system prior to the incident	171 (69%)	225 (57%)	396 (62%)	108 (38%)	343 (56%)	451 (50%)
Average age at incident	25.58	32.64	29.02	28.33	28.61	29
Average # of prior arrests	1.77	1.49	1.62	2.07	1.84	2
Average # of prior felony arrests	1.63	1.44	1.54	1.7	1.67	2
Prior incarceration	49.71%	51.11%	50.51%	50.93%	44.61%	46.12%
Prior community supervision	14.62%	7.56%	10.61%	-	-	-
Active community supervision	2.34%	5.78%	4.29%	-	-	-
Any prior/active community supervision	15.20%	9.33%	11.87%	-	-	-

² IMPD converted its record management system in 2019 and was only able to provide data on arrests that occurred after that time. As a result, all prior arrest data should be assumed to be undercounts.

Among suspects of both homicides (Figure 2) and nonfatal shootings (Figure 3), prior arrests for violent offenses were among the most common reasons for those arrests. Drug offenses and an array of “other” offenses were also common.

Figure 2. Homicide Suspects and Victims: Prior Arrests

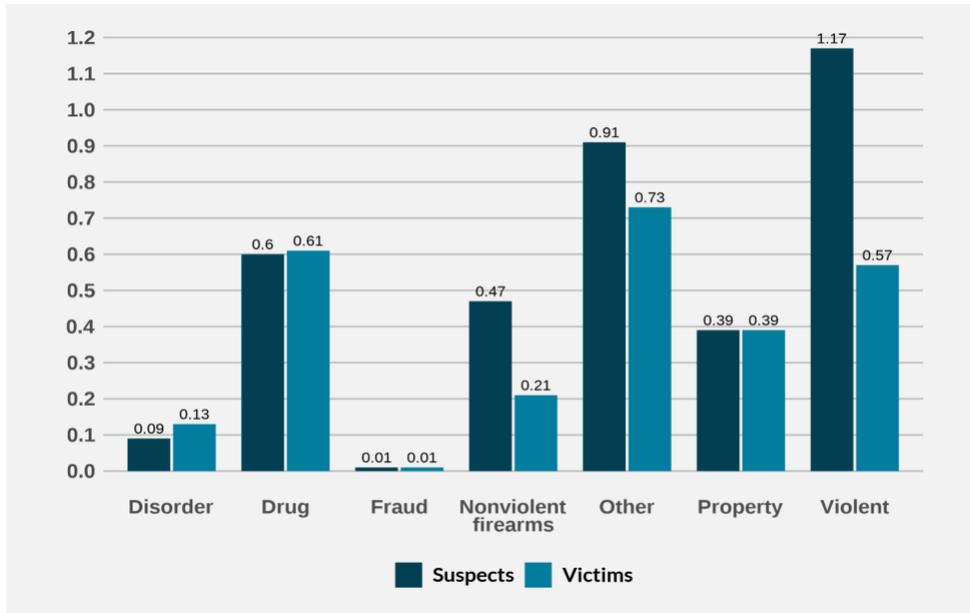
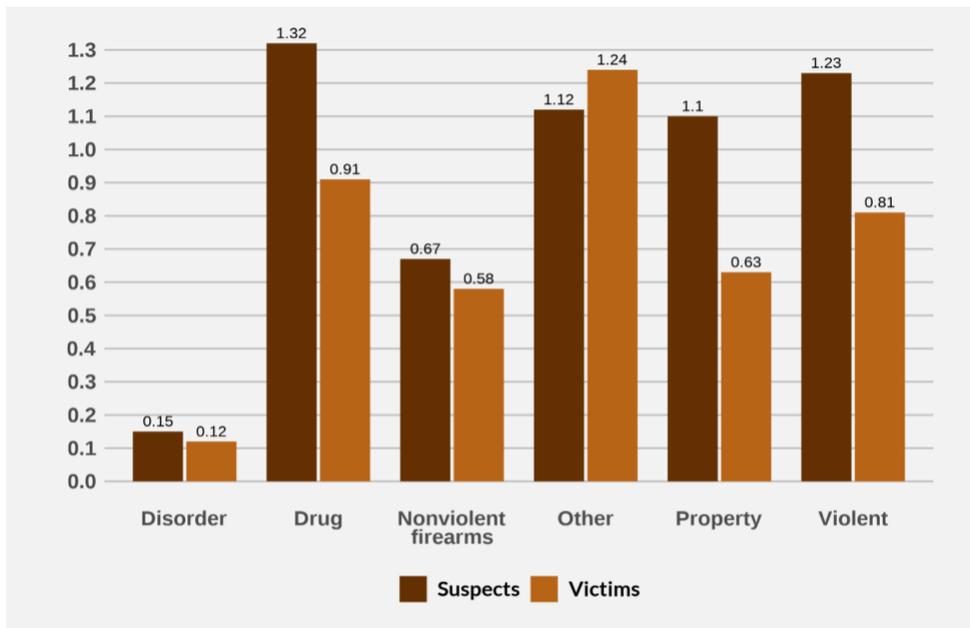


Figure 3. Nonfatal Shooting Suspects and Victims: Prior Arrests



Repeat Involvement

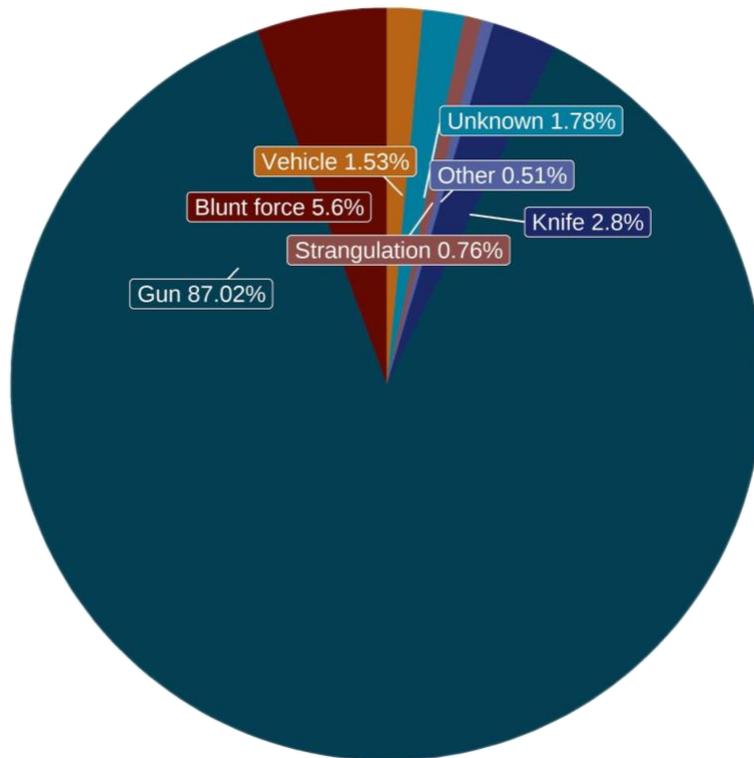
Of the 1,410 unique suspects and victims across both homicides and non-fatal shootings, 35 people (2.5%) appear more than once as victims, suspects, or both. All of those individuals were male, most were Black, except for two. Among the individuals involved in multiple shooting incidents, the majority were most likely to be victims in more than one event (n=6). Of these 35 people, 11 (31.4%) were initially involved in a nonfatal shooting and were later connected to a homicide. Specifically, nine individuals became homicide victims in a subsequent incident, while seven became homicide suspects. Fifteen individuals were 18-24 years old, twelve were 25-34 years old, five were under 18, and three were over 35 at the first incident.

Incident Analysis

Homicides

This section analyzes the circumstances of homicide events from January 2022 – December 2023 (n=393). Most of these homicides (342, or 87.02%) involved a firearm as the primary weapon (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Homicides: Weapons/Causes



Slightly more than one-fifth (22.14%) of homicides were confirmed to involve group members as victims, suspects, or both, and in more than half (53.69%) of all homicides, the group involvement of victims and/or suspects was unknown. Therefore, at least 22% and potentially up to 75% of homicides involved group members as victims, suspects, or both, though the exact percentage is unknown.³ When homicides involved group members as victims and/or suspects, the most common motives were personal disputes (20.99%), ongoing group conflict (18.52%) and retaliation or revenge (13.58%) (Table 5).

Table 5. Homicides: Circumstances and Group Involvement

Circumstance	Total		Group-Involved		Not Group-Involved	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Domestic violence	24	12.06%	3	3.70%	21	24.14%
Drug robbery	8	4.02%	5	6.17%	3	3.45%
Drug-related dispute	10	5.03%	3	3.70%	7	8.05%
Instant dispute	18	9.05%	9	11.11%	9	10.34%
Internal group conflict	2	1.01%	2	2.47%	-	-
Ongoing group conflict	15	7.54%	15	18.52%	-	-
Other	8	4.02%	3	3.70%	5	5.75%
Personal dispute	36	18.09%	17	20.99%	19	21.84%
Retaliation/Revenge	16	8.04%	11	13.58%	5	5.75%
Robbery	19	9.55%	9	11.11%	10	11.49%
Unknown	12	6.03%	4	4.94%	8	9.20%

Nonfatal Shootings

This section analyzes the circumstances of nonfatal shooting events from January 2023 – December 2023 (n=521). Almost one-fifth (18.47%) of nonfatal shootings were confirmed to involve group members as victims, suspects, or both, and in another 53.36% of incidents, the group involvement of victims and/or suspects was unknown. Therefore, between 18-71% of nonfatal shootings involved group members as victims, suspects, or both, though the exact

³ Information on group involvement was gathered through interviews with homicide and nonfatal shooting detectives, as well as focus groups with crime analysts, patrol officers, sergeants, and lieutenants from local police districts. It is important to note that there were gaps and contradictions in their knowledge about these dynamics; the information received from one-on-one interviews did not always align with the information given during the focus groups within local districts.

percentage is unknown. When known group members were involved, almost a quarter of shootings occurred as a result of ongoing group conflict (24.21%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Nonfatal Shooting Circumstances and Group Involvement

	Total (n=321)		Group-Involved (n=145)		Not Group-Involved (n=176)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Domestic violence	19	5.92%	3	3.16%	16	13.91%
Drug robbery	7	2.18%	6	6.32%	1	0.87%
Drug-related dispute	3	0.93%	1	1.05%	2	1.74%
Instant dispute	18	5.61%	7	7.37%	11	9.57%
Internal group conflict	2	0.62%	2	2.11%	-	-
Ongoing group conflict	23	7.17%	23	24.21%	-	-
Other	14	4.36%	6	6.32%	8	6.96%
Personal dispute	45	14.02%	12	12.63%	33	28.70%
Retaliation/Revenge	11	3.43%	7	7.37%	4	3.48%
Robbery	20	6.23%	8	8.42%	12	10.43%
Unknown	48	14.95%	20	21.05%	28	24.35%

High-Risk Groups and Networks

Group involvement information was collected via interviews with homicide and nonfatal shooting detectives and focus groups with crime analysts, district-based proactive task force officers, sergeants, and lieutenants. Case investigators and analysts provided group association information for suspects and victims where possible. However, data and intelligence challenges did exist. Even in incidents where investigators or analysts identified victims or suspects as being involved in a group, they often could not identify specific group associations.

Therefore, we caution that this picture of high-risk groups and networks is not complete in that it only highlights those groups most prominently known to police. Given the amount of missing data and group-related intelligence, this analysis may not accurately reflect the most violent groups and dynamics in Indianapolis.

Detectives identified at least 55 groups connected to victims and/or suspects involved in homicides and nonfatal shootings between 2023 and 2024, with 17 of those groups linked to two or more incidents. District-based proactive units reported a total of 37 active groups across the city, in addition to 21 groups considered dormant. Notably, most of these groups or cliques are not the traditional, hierarchical, and structured “gangs” with stable territories and colors that used to be more prevalent in Indianapolis. Instead, groups and their known neighborhoods were noted to be unstable and dynamic, with associated members frequently crossing city districts and sometimes holding very fluid associations with multiple groups. Most groups are active in the East, North, and Southwest Districts.

Key Interview and Focus Group Takeaways

In a series of focus groups with officers from the Violent Crime Task Forces and Violence Reduction Teams within each IMPD District, officers estimated that individuals who are members of or affiliated with groups or gangs were responsible for anywhere from 40–80% of shootings in the city. Not that the motive of the shooting was always a gang conflict, but just that the perpetrator or victim was group or gang involved. A district with one of the highest levels of gun violence estimated the rate was 80%. The former Captain of the Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) [was quoted](#) as saying he believes gangs are responsible for more than 40% of gun violence in the city. But a much smaller number of shootings and homicides were identified by investigators as having group/gang members involved. This discrepancy is likely due to the need for greater coordination and communication between district proactive teams and detectives as well as a need for increased and improved intelligence gathering.

Indianapolis also appears to have less group/gang related shootings than other major urban cities, and group/gang involvement is more of an individual risk factor than a causation for the shooting.

There are also many [music videos](#) posted to social media in Indianapolis that profile the group/crew activity in the city. Additionally, social networks that engage in criminal activity but may not appear to be formal gangs also commit retaliatory violence.

The task force officers in Indianapolis also attribute a large amount of gun violence to the sale of marijuana. According to these officers, marijuana dealers are independent operators, who are not connected to larger drug distribution networks or to gangs or groups. Marijuana dealers are often the target of robberies because they often have a large amount of cash on them. Individuals selling marijuana also frequently carry guns, so robberies can turn to shoot outs.

Conversely, interviews with detectives reviewing individual shooting incidents do not indicate that a large proportion of shootings or homicides are driven by marijuana or other drug sales. (See Table 5 and Table 6 for details.)

Other drivers identified by officers included alcohol, permitless carry gun laws, social media, and robberies. Officers indicated that gun violence often erupted at clubs where people are drinking and conflicts escalate from arguments to shootings. Social media – especially related to “drill rap” conflict videos – is a main contributor to violence. Gun laws in Indiana allow for permitless carry, increasing the likelihood that individuals are armed and that even nominal conflicts escalate into shootings.

Officers identified several other challenges. One of the most prevalent challenges discussed is the feeling of impunity among those involved in criminal activity. Officers reported that prosecutors often undercharge and offered light sentences for plea deals. Officers indicated that prosecutors do not charge low-level drug or gun cases, and there is a lack of communication between prosecutors and officers.

Data and Methodology

Quantitative data for this analysis was collected from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD), Marion County Community Corrections (MCCC), the Indiana Department of Corrections (IDOC), and the Indiana Courts’ Case Lookup System. IMPD provided data on all homicides in Indianapolis from January 2022-December 2023 and all nonfatal injury shootings from January 2023-December 2023, as well as data on demographic characteristics and prior arrests for suspects and victims of those shootings. MCC and IDOC provided additional data on criminal justice system contact for these individuals. Variations in data availability contributed to differences in the sample sizes (n’s) across the analyses.

Interviews with IMPD detectives and focus groups with geographic district-based officers and crime analysts supplemented these quantitative data with more in-depth information about local group dynamics, as well as circumstances surrounding shooting incidents. Inconsistencies in group-related information from detectives and district-based officers indicate a need for greater intelligence sharing and coordination.

Summary Findings and Recommendations

The suspects and victims of homicides and nonfatal shootings have very similar characteristics and risk factors. They are overwhelmingly young Black men aged 18-34. Most have a significant criminal justice history, and the majority of those known to the criminal justice system prior to the review period have been previously incarcerated. A significant number of those involved in shootings are also associated with groups or gangs.

The City's Gun Violence Reduction Strategy is appropriately focused on this population for intervention and should continue and expand. As indicated above, accurate intelligence gathering by law enforcement should increase and improve.