

UNDERSTANDING GUN VIOLENCE AMONG MARYLAND YOUTH: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS



DECEMBER 2023

Introduction

In June 2023, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), with funding from the Abell Foundation, partnered with the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) and the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) to conduct a gun violence problem analysis (GVPA) to better understand risk factors for involvement in shootings among youth who are engaged with the State of Maryland delinquency system. As part of this effort, NICJR, with support from AECF and the expertise of the DJS research team, conducted a series of analyses examining characteristics of young people who were involved in a shooting between January 2019 and June 2023. This included both comparing these young people to other DJS-involved youth who have never been part of a shooting and also more intensively analyzing the lives, experiences, and delinquency system histories of those youth who have been involved in shootings. Ultimately, this analysis aims to hone in on the risk factors for involvement in shootings among DJS-involved young people so that the Department can more proactively identify youth under their care who are similarly at risk and provide immediate and intensive services to mitigate that risk.¹

Below, are the key findings, followed by an overview of the methodology and the results of a series of analyses:

- 1) a brief description of all youth involved in shootings in Maryland from January 2019 to June 2023, with additional detail on those known to DJS;
- 2) a comparative analysis of youth known to DJS who have known involvement in a shooting; and
- 3) an analysis of youth who were under the care of DJS at the time of their involvement in a shooting. In Appendix A, we further delve into the lives and experiences of youth under the care of DJS at the time of a shooting to provide insight into dynamics not discernible through quantitative data alone.

¹ It is important to note that youth account for a very small percentage of either overall crime or violent crime. For example, a separate [research brief](#) prepared by DJS found that juvenile arrests are less likely to be for violent crime than are adult arrests and that “adults represent 93% of homicide arrests.”

Key Findings

All youth involved in shootings in Maryland

- ❖ Maryland youth were almost twice as likely to be the victim of a shooting than to be a suspect.
- ❖ The majority of youth involved in shootings in Maryland had no prior contact with the delinquency system, but 64.41% of juvenile shooting suspects did have prior arrests., compared with only 46.16% of victims.
- ❖ Demographically and geographically, victims and suspects are indistinguishable: the majority of shooting victims and suspects were Black teenage boys who live in Baltimore City.

Youth involved in shootings compared to other youth known to DJS

- ❖ Of 12,772 youth who were referred to DJS in 2019, only 257 (2%) were involved in a shooting by June 2023. Of these, two-thirds (166 youth) were shooting victims.
- ❖ Youth who were involved in shootings were more likely to be Black, male, and live in Baltimore City. They were also younger at the time of their initial contact with the delinquency system.
- ❖ By the time they were involved in a shooting, youth had, on average, 6 petitions filed and 2.7 sustained adjudications. By contrast, other DJS youth had slightly fewer than 3 delinquency petitions and 2 adjudications by the end of the study period.²
- ❖ Youth who were involved in shootings were much more likely to have been petitioned and adjudicated for felony crimes of violence. By the time they were involved in a shooting, almost two-thirds of these youth had been charged with a felony crime of violence, and one-third had a sustained petition for a felony crime of violence. For other youth, these numbers were approximately half.
- ❖ By the time they were involved in shootings, many youth had multiple terms of supervision and placement. More than 80% of youth involved in shootings had previously been under at least one form of supervision, and more than half had been under more than one. Most also had both residential and nonresidential placements.

² For youth involved in a shooting, the end of the study period refers to the time of their first gun violence incident. For youth who were not involved in a shooting, the study period ends June, 2023. See methods for more information.

Youth under DJS supervision at the time of a shooting

- ❖ The vast majority (85.45%) of youth under supervision when involved in a shooting were Black boys. Almost half (46.64%) lived in Baltimore City.
- ❖ Youth had, on average, 7 petitions (court filings), of which 2.76 were sustained, prior to being involved in a shooting.
- ❖ More than three-quarters of youth had a prior petition for a felony crime of violence; one-third had a prior adjudication for a felony crime of violence.
- ❖ By the time they were involved in shootings, most youth had multiple terms of supervision and placement, including both pre- and post-adjudication supervisions and placements.
- ❖ Many youth had clear and immediate risk factors for violence that were known to their Case Management Specialists (CMSs), such as recent physical confrontations with other youth and/or family members or involvement in a violent crew or gang conflict.
- ❖ Most youth were unable to attend traditional schools due to learning disabilities and/or behavioral issues.
- ❖ Lengthy delays in case processing resulted in months or even years passing between when youth were involved in dangerous conduct and when they received any type of direct services.

Methods

Quantitative Data

The Maryland State Police (MSP) provided DJS with data for all shooting incidents involving a minor suspect or victim in the State of Maryland from January 2019 to June 2023. Youth data were de-identified prior to being provided to NICJR and AECF. Youth were identified individually using a random number and in relation to the shooting using an incident number. A few young people were involved in more than one gun violence incident. These youth were matched to ensure they were only included one time in data analyses.

DJS located information in their Automated Statewide System of Information Support Tools (ASSIST) database for all youth involved in a shooting and with a history of DJS involvement in their lifetime by matching shooting-involved youth from the MSP dataset by name and date of birth. Data gathered from the ASSIST database were filtered to include youth histories from first involvement with DJS until the time of the shooting incident. For young people with more than one shooting incident, only data known at the time of the first shooting incident were used for analysis, unless otherwise specified.

Six shootings related to youth with no DJS involvement were removed prior to analysis. Four of these cases were removed because the involved youth could not be accurately identified by DJS, one was removed because the youth was confirmed to be an infant, and one removed because it was a duplicate in the data. Two cases involving youth with DJS involvement were removed as duplicates.

The youth involved in shootings from January 2019 to June 2023 ($n = 978$) were separated into further categories. First, they were divided into youth with a delinquency history with DJS at any point in their life (known to DJS; $n = 592$) and youth with no involvement with DJS (unknown to DJS; $n = 386$). Youth unknown to DJS were removed from all analyses unless otherwise noted. There were 100 youth currently known to DJS but who did not have delinquency history prior to their shooting incident. They were not removed from analyses; however, all analyses for youth involved in shootings used DJS history data prior to and including the first known shooting. Consequently, youth with no history prior to their first shootings did not have available data for these analyses.

Youth known to DJS were further divided into a group of youth who were actively under DJS supervision at the time of their first gun violence incidents ($n = 165$). Active supervision refers to active status on probation, aftercare, pre-court supervision, community detention/electronic monitoring (CD/EM), active writ, evening reporting, or interstate compact.

DJS also provided lifetime histories from the ASSIST database for all youth who had a complaint filed with DJS from 2018 to July 2023. These data were used to create a cohort of youth to be compared against the youth involved in a shooting. To create a cohort, we evaluated the histories of all youth with at least one complaint filed in 2019 ($n = 12,772$). This year was selected because it had the greatest number of youth with a filed complaint, and it coincided with the first year of shooting data provided by MSP. This 2019 cohort was divided into a group of youth who were not involved in a shooting from January 2019 to June 2023 ($n = 12,515$) and

a group of youth who were involved in at least one shooting from January 2019 to June 2023 (n = 257).

For youth with shooting involvement, comparative analyses were completed using Excel to evaluate differences in their delinquency system contact at the time of their 2019 complaint(s) and at the time of the first shooting they were involved in. For youth without shooting involvement, comparative analyses evaluated differences between the time of their 2019 complaint(s) and at the end of the analytic timeframe, or June 2023. This is similar to survival analysis techniques used in public health research. This approach follows the cohort from a relative start point (first contact with DJS) until the youth experiences a shooting incident or the time period ends, with a mid-point analysis at 2019 complaint(s). This also allows for evaluation of differences between youth at the same time prior to a shooting (2019), as well as evaluation of differences using information known about the young people at the time of their gun violence incident or in 2023, respectively. This provides insight into what was known then as well as what is now known about youth involved in shootings, showing what information could have been used to determine risk of shooting involvement at a common time of arrest, and what would only be known in hindsight.

Descriptive analyses of youth involved in a shooting while on active DJS supervision were completed in Excel. These analyses describe the common characteristics of youth involved in a shooting while on active supervision. Only data related to youths' first shootings were used for these analyses.

Case File Reviews

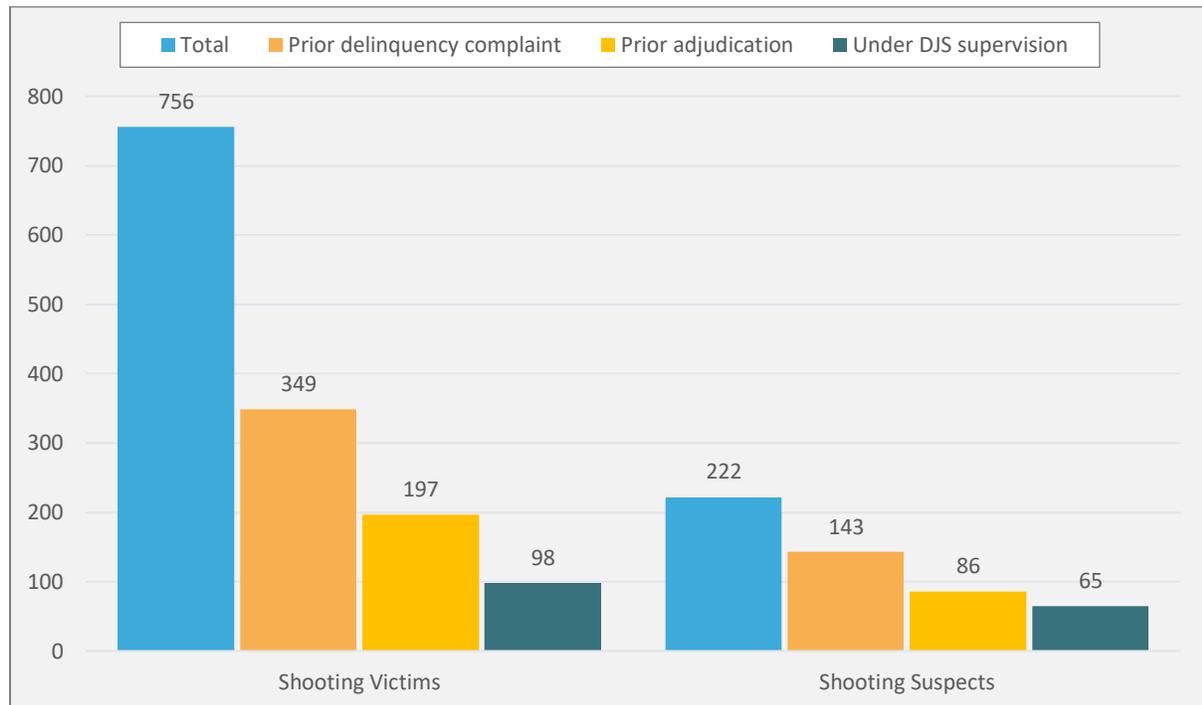
Quantitative analyses were supplemented with a review of the DJS case files of 44 youth who were involved in shootings in 2023 and were under DJS supervision at the time. The research team used both deductive and inductive approaches to coding case files. In terms of the former, NICJR quantified youths' demographic and geographic characteristics as well as other youth characteristics known to be associated with gun violence, such as behavioral health issues and educational challenges. In addition, we used inductive open coding to identify additional themes and patterns in young people's lives and experiences.

I. All Youth Involved in Shootings in Maryland

According to MSP, between January 1, 2019 and June 30, 2023, there were 1,018 shootings in Maryland that involved a minor as a victim or a suspect. A total of 978 young people were involved in these shootings, the vast majority of whom (947, or 96.8%) were involved in only one shooting. More than three quarters of these youth (754, or 77.1%) were shooting victims, while 217 (22.2%) were shooting suspects, and seven (<1%) were victims and suspects (at different times).³

Only half of the youth involved in a shooting in Maryland (492, or 50.3%) had a delinquency petition filed prior to being involved in a shooting, and only 165 (16.8%) of these youth were under any form of DJS supervision (including probation, aftercare, and CD/EM) when involved in a shooting. Although youth who were shooting suspects were more likely than victims to have had a prior delinquency petition or adjudication, it is nonetheless noteworthy how similar the patterns are between suspects and victims.

Figure 1. Half of youth involved in shootings January 2019 – June 2023 did not have prior delinquency system contact.



Consistent with other research on shootings, victims and suspects of shootings were extremely similar in terms of geography, demographics, and justice system involvement.

Consistent with shooting patterns across the state, a disproportionate percentage of these shootings happened in Baltimore City and involved youth who live there. In addition, both victims and suspects were disproportionately Black and male.

³ Data were only available for the 3.5 years under study, it is possible individuals involved in shootings during the time period were also involved in one or more shootings outside of the study window.

Table 1. The majority of shooting incidents involving youth occurred in Baltimore City and Prince George's County.

Jurisdiction	Suspects		Victims	
	N	%	N	%
Baltimore City	47	21.56%	338	44.47%
Prince George's County	61	27.98%	150	19.74%
Anne Arundel County	17	7.80%	51	6.71%
Baltimore County	11	5.05%	60	7.89%
Montgomery County	12	5.50%	30	3.95%
Washington County	9	4.13%	15	1.97%
Charles County	5	2.29%	15	1.97%
Wicomico County	4	1.83%	8	1.05%
Harford County	2	0.92%	8	1.05%
St. Mary's County	-	-	7	0.92%
Dorchester County	3	1.38%	7	0.92%
Frederick County	2	0.92%	6	0.79%
Howard County	2	0.92%	5	0.66%
Cecil County	1	0.46%	5	0.66%
Howard County	2	0.92%	5	0.66%
Worcester County	1	0.46%	3	0.39%
Somerset County	1	0.46%	2	0.26%
Allegany County	1	0.46%	1	0.13%
Carroll County	1	0.46%	1	0.13%
Calvert County	-	-	1	0.13%
Caroline County	-	-	1	0.13%
Queen Anne's County	-	-	1	0.13%
No Address Data	36	17.43%	40	5.92%
Total	218	100%	760	100%

Table 2. The majority of youth involved in gun violence were Black boys.⁴

Race	Suspects				Victims			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Asian	-	-	-	-	4	0.53%	1	0.13%
Black	150	69.12%	11	5.07%	553	73.25%	96	12.72%
Latino	34	15.67%	4	1.84%	32	4.24%	7	0.93%
White	16	7.37%	-	-	47	6.23%	7	0.93%
Unknown	2	0.92%	-	-	6	0.79%	2	0.26%

⁴ Excludes individuals with unknown sex.

II. Comparing Youth Involved in Shootings to Other DJS-Involved Youth

In 2019, a total of 12,772 young people had one or more delinquency petitions filed in the State of Maryland. Over the next four and a half years, 98% (or 12,515) of these youth had no known involvement in a shooting. Among the 257 young people who did, 65% (166 youth) were shooting victims, 33% (86 youth) were suspects, and 2% (five youth) were both victims and suspects.

The following analyses compare these two groups of young people, examining differences between DJS-involved youth who were never involved in a shooting and those who were, in order to discern differences between these youth and increase DJS's ability to identify other young people who are at risk of involvement in a shooting. Static characteristics, such as race and gender, are examined only once. Dynamic characteristics, such as age and delinquency system contact, are examined twice: first at the point of their first 2019 complaint by which they were identified for inclusion in this analysis, and then again at the time of their first shooting incident or, for those with no shootings, at the end of the analytic timeframe, or June 2023.⁵ Because our initial analyses revealed no meaningful differences between youth who were shooting victims and those who were suspects, the analyses in this section do not disaggregate victims and suspects.⁶ This pattern is supported by a large body of research showing that victims and suspects of community-based gun violence very closely resemble each other.

Demographics

Consistent with a sizeable body of criminological research, this analysis found that Black boys were at disproportionate risk for involvement in gun violence, even beyond their disproportionate representation in the delinquency system. As Table 1 shows, 81.7% of youth involved in shootings were Black boys, which is more than twice their representation in the larger population of youth with petitions. By contrast, White boys and Black girls, each of whom constituted one fifth of youth with petitions, were both fairly small percentages of youth involved in shootings.

⁵ Additional information about this approach is provided in the Methods section above.

⁶ See Appendix B for analyses that disaggregate victims and suspects.

Table 3. Black boys made up more than 80% of youth involved in shootings, compared to less than 40% of youth with petitions.

Race/Ethnicity	Not shooting-involved				Shooting-involved			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	14	0.11%	7	0.06%	-	-	-	-
Asian	51	0.41%	28	0.22%	-	-	-	-
Black	4934	39.42%	2563	20.48%	210	81.71%	11	4.28%
Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	5	0.04%	5	0.04%	-	-	-	-
Latino	674	5.39%	219	1.75%	14	5.45%	1	0.39%
White	2607	20.83%	1285	10.27%	18	7.00%	1	0.39%
Unknown	79	0.63%	44	0.35%	1	0.39%	1	0.39%

In addition, youth who were involved in shootings were far more likely to reside in Baltimore City than other youth, with more than 40% of youth involved in shootings living in Baltimore City, compared to only 15.66% of youth overall. Further, youth involved in shootings were highly concentrated in a small number of counties—consistent with larger gun violence patterns in Maryland. As Table 2 shows, more than 70% of youth involved in shootings lived in Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, or Prince George’s County. By contrast, youth who were otherwise involved in the delinquency system were much more dispersed across the state.

Table 4. The majority of youth involved in shootings lived in a small number of counties.⁷

Jurisdiction	Not shooting-involved		Shooting-involved	
	N	%	N	%
Baltimore City	1960	15.66%	108	42.02%
Anne Arundel County	1464	11.70%	42	16.34%
Baltimore County	1176	9.40%	19	7.39%
Montgomery County	1094	8.74%	11	4.28%
Prince George’s County	952	7.61%	32	12.45%
Frederick County	547	4.37%	1	0.39%

⁷ According to available data, 202 youth lived in more than one county in 2019 and had a complaint while living in each county. Residence data were not available for 33 youth, all of whom were not involved in a shooting.

Washington County	488	3.90%	14	5.45%
Wicomico County	431	3.44%	5	1.95%
Charles County	429	3.43%	6	2.33%
Harford County	420	3.36%	4	1.56%
St. Mary's County	394	3.15%	1	0.39%
Howard County	371	2.96%	7	2.72%
Cecil County	303	2.42%	1	0.39%
Allegany County	301	2.41%	-	-
Calvert County	280	2.24%	-	-
Dorchester County	276	2.21%	3	1.17%
Somerset County	242	1.93%	1	0.39%
Carroll County	233	1.86%	1	0.39%
Worcester County	133	1.06%	4	1.56%
Caroline County	131	1.05%	-	-
Garrett County	113	0.90%	-	-
Queen Anne's County	110	0.88%	1	0.39%
Talbot County	107	0.85%	-	-
Kent County	96	0.77%	-	-
Washington, DC	305	2.44%	2	0.78%
Out of state	317	2.53%	5	1.95%
No Address Data	33	0.26%	-	-

At the time of their 2019 petitions, youth who were involved in shootings were younger than the majority of youth who had petitions that year, with a mean age of 15.3 years compared to 15.6 years. In addition, the mode (or most common) age at the time of their 2019 petitions was 14 years old for youth who would go on to be involved in shootings, compared to 17 years old for those who would not. By the time they were involved in a shooting, however, youth were older, with a mean age that was almost a full year older and a mode age of 17.

Table 5. Youth involved in shootings were younger at the time of their 2019 petitions than other youth.

Age	Not shooting-involved (age in 2019)		Shooting-involved (age in 2019)		Shooting-involved (age at time of shooting)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 10	101	0.81%	-	0%	-	0%
10	121	0.97%	-	0%	-	0%
11	216	1.73%	4	1.56%	1	0.39%
12	554	4.43%	7	2.72%	-	0%
13	944	7.54%	26	10.12%	3	1.17%
14	1410	11.27%	40	15.56%	7	2.72%
15	1839	14.69%	61	23.74%	22	8.86%
16	2319	18.53%	60	23.35%	46	17.90%
17	2772	22.15%	33	12.84%	83	32.30%
18	2167	17.32%	23	8.95%	79	30.74%
19-21 ⁸	72	0.58%	2	1.17%	22	6.22%
Mean	15.61		15.31		16.95	

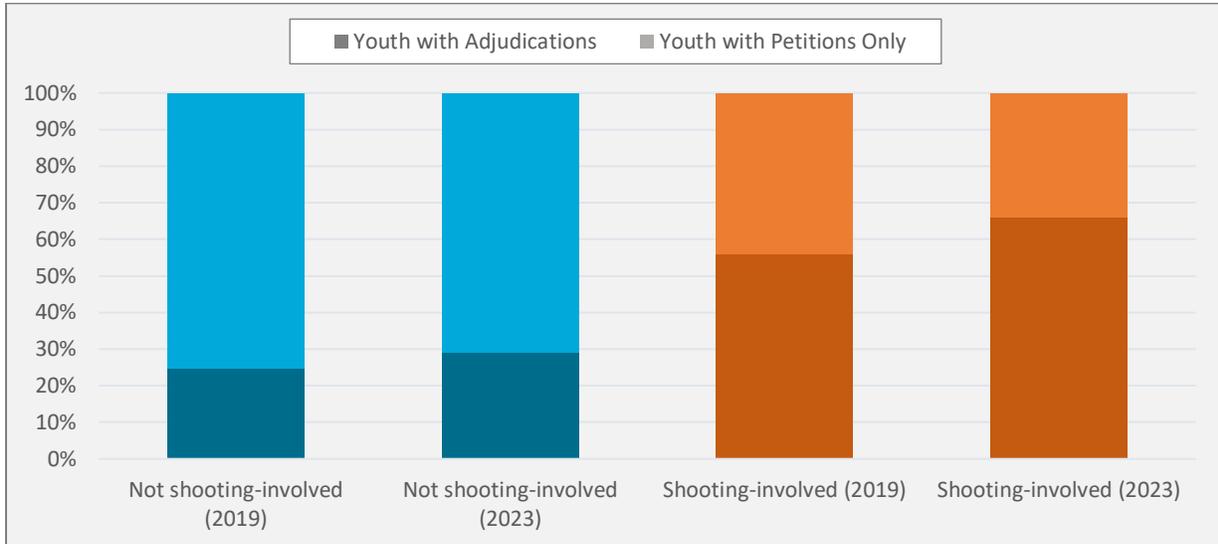
Delinquency System Contact

Youth who were involved in shootings also looked noticeably different from other DJS-involved youth in terms of delinquency system contact, both at the time of their 2019 petitions and at the end of the analysis period. Three-quarters (75.21%) of those who were not involved in shootings had never been adjudicated delinquent, while more than half (56.03%) of those who would go on to be involved in a shooting had a sustained adjudication in 2019. By 2023, this gap had grown, with two-thirds (66.15%) of youth involved in shootings having had at least one sustained petition, while there was almost no change among other youth.

⁸ DJS has some youth over 18 on their caseloads if the young people were adjudicated before their 18th birthdays or adjudicated as adults for incidents that occurred before they turned 18. As a result, a small percentage of DJS's caseload are over 18 years old, which accounts for the fact that even though 18-21 year olds are involved in significantly more shootings than juveniles, it is not apparent in this analysis because it only accounts for the very small percentage of 18-21 year olds under DJS supervision (or known to DJS).

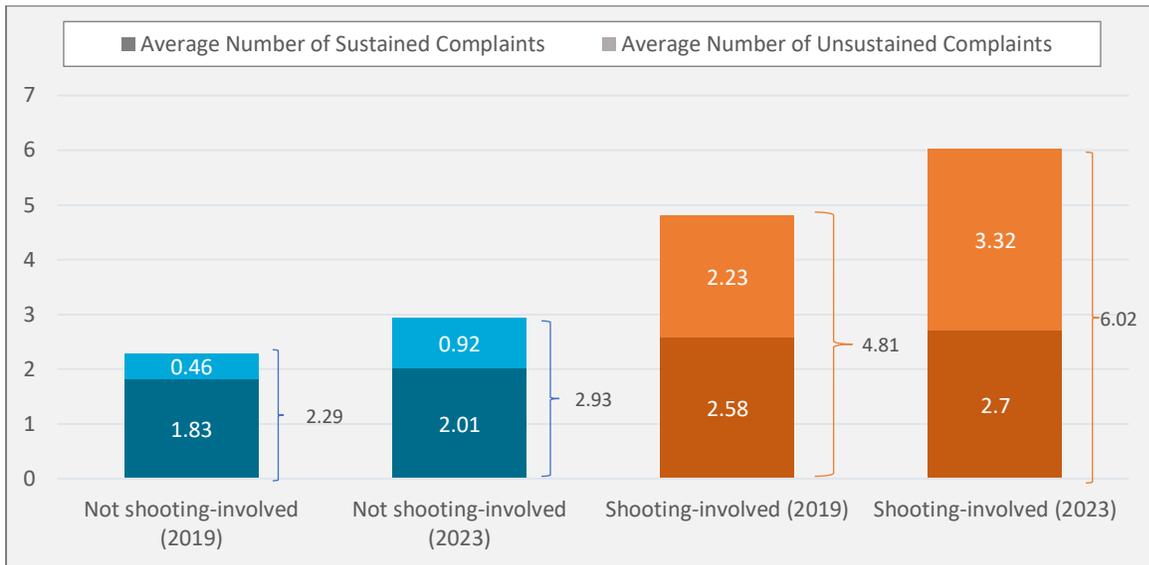
Petitions and Adjudications

Figure 2. Youth who were involved in shootings were more likely than other youth to have been adjudicated delinquent in 2019 and in 2023.



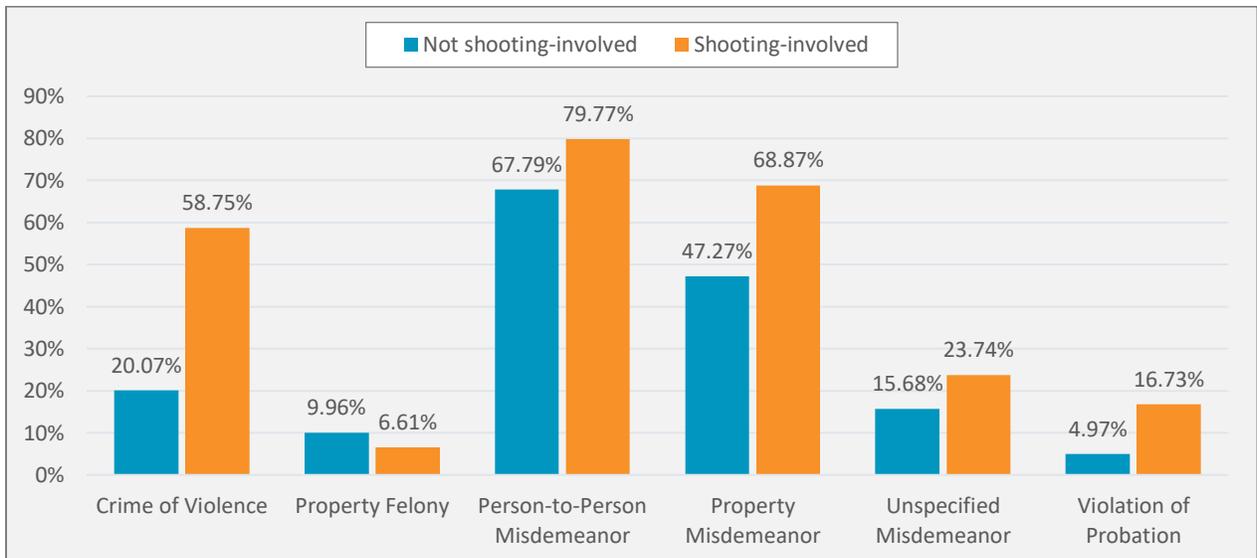
Given this pattern, it is unsurprising that youth who were involved in shootings had, on average, more delinquency petitions and more sustained adjudications at the time of their 2019 complaints, with a gap that more than doubled by 2023. In 2019, youth involved in shootings had a mean number of 4.81 petitions, of which 2.58 had been sustained, compared to other youth who had 2.29 petitions, of which 1.83 were sustained. By 2023, most youth had seen little to no increase in the number of petitions, sustained or otherwise, while youth involved in shootings had an average of 6 petitions, of which 2.7 had been sustained (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Youth involved in shootings had an average of 6 petitions, of which 2.7 were sustained, by the time they were involved in a shooting.



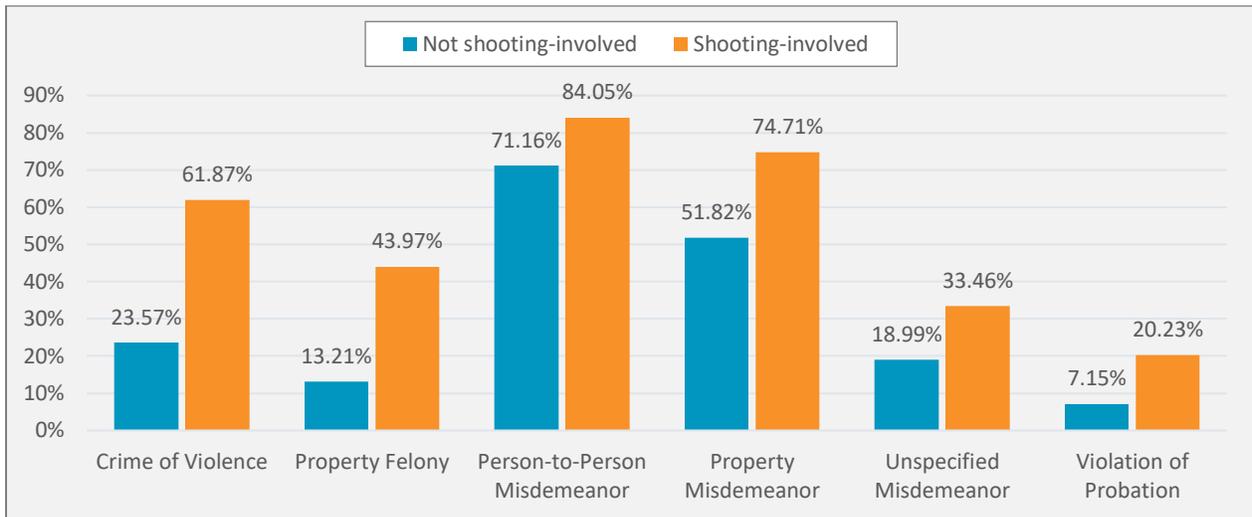
Youth who were involved in shootings also had far more petitions for felony crimes of violence than did other youth, both at the time of their 2019 petitions and by the time they were involved in shootings. At the time of their 2019 petitions, 58.75% of youth who would go on to be involved in shootings had been charged with a felony crime of violence (Figure 4)—a number that increased to 61.87% by the time of their first shooting incident (Figure 5). By contrast, being charged with a felony crime of violence was uncommon for other youth, either in 2019 (20.07%, Figure 4) or by mid-2023 (23.57%, Figure 5).

Figure 4. As of 2019, more than half of youth who would go on to be involved in a shooting had been charged with a felony crime of violence.⁹



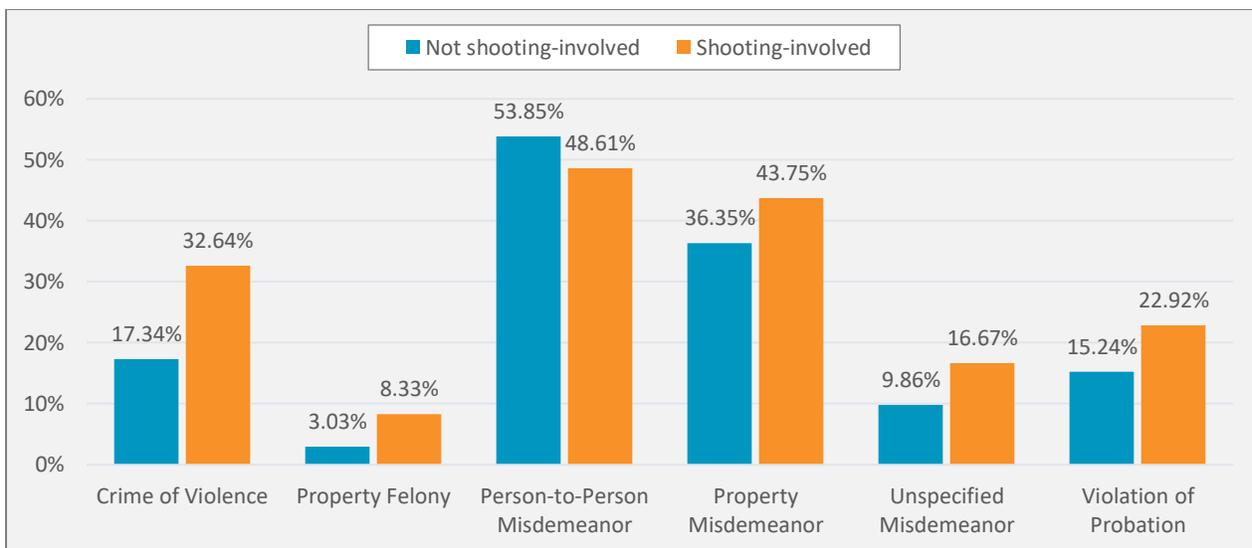
⁹ Totals more than 100% because youth can have petitions for more than one type of incident.

Figure 5. By the time the shooting occurred, almost two-thirds of youth involved in a shooting had been charged with a felony crime of violence.¹⁰



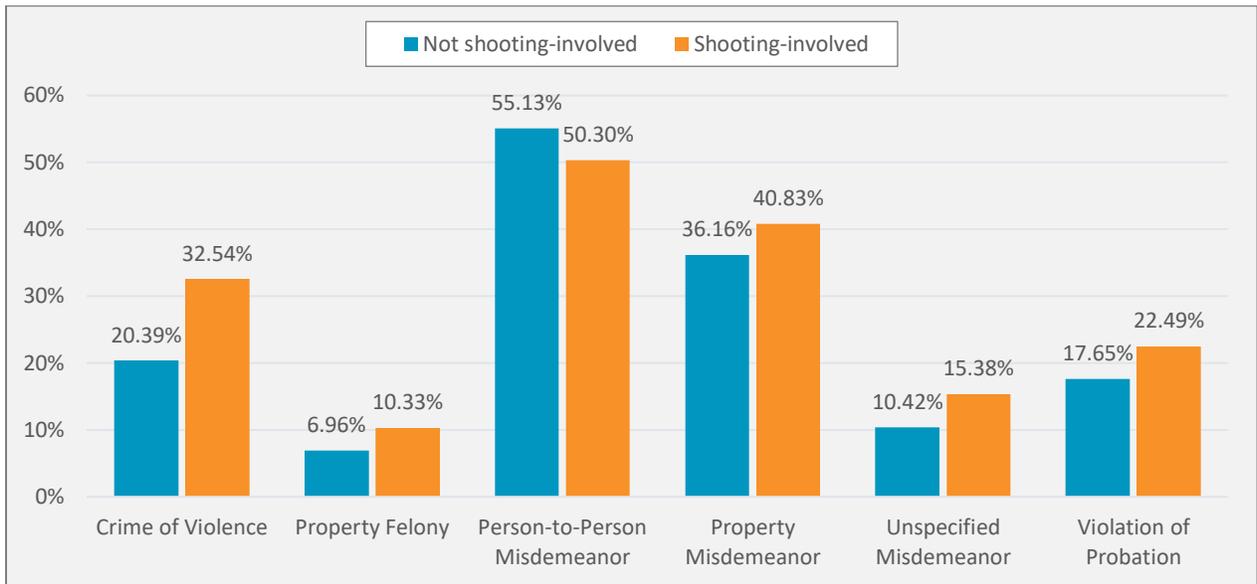
Youth who were involved in gun violence were also almost twice as likely as other youth to have a sustained petition for a crime of violence, both at the time of the 2019 petitions and by 2023. In 2019, youth who were involved in shootings were much more likely than other youth to have had a sustained petition for a person-to-person misdemeanor and/or a violation of probation (Figure 6). By the time they were involved in shootings, almost one-third (32.54%) of youth had a sustained petition for a felony crime of violence; by the end of the analysis period, only 20.39% of other youth did (Figure 7).

Figure 6. Youth who were involved in shootings were more likely to have sustained petitions for felony crimes of violence and/or person-to-person misdemeanors in 2019.



¹⁰ Totals more than 100% because youth can have petitions for more than one type of incident.

Figure 7. By the time the shooting occurred, youth involved in shootings were even more likely to have a sustained felony crime of violence.



Supervision and Placement History

At the time of their 2019 complaints, slightly more than half (52.53%) of youth who would go on to be involved in a shooting had never been under any form of DJS supervision—a number that would drop to less than a quarter (22.18%) by the time they were involved in a shooting. By this time, the majority of youth had been under more than one type of DJS supervision, including pre-court supervision, probation, community supervision, and/or aftercare. By contrast, only half of other youth with petitions filed in 2019 had been under any form of DJS supervision by July 2023, with the most common form being pre-adjudication court supervision. (Figure 8 and Figure 9).

Figure 8. In 2019, most youth had not been under any form of DJS supervision.

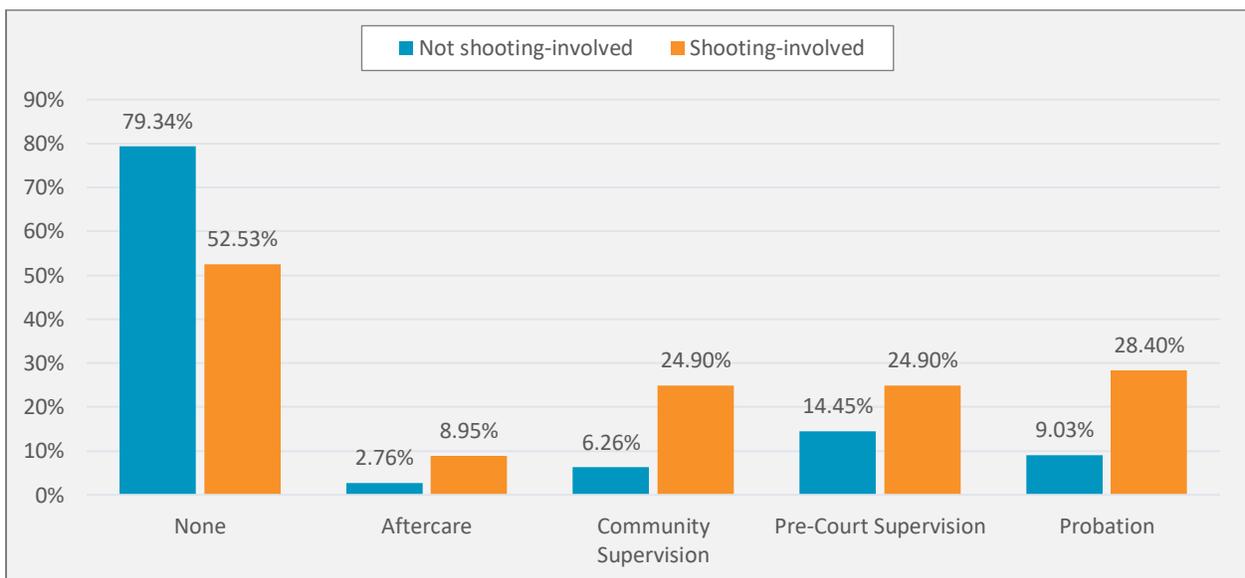
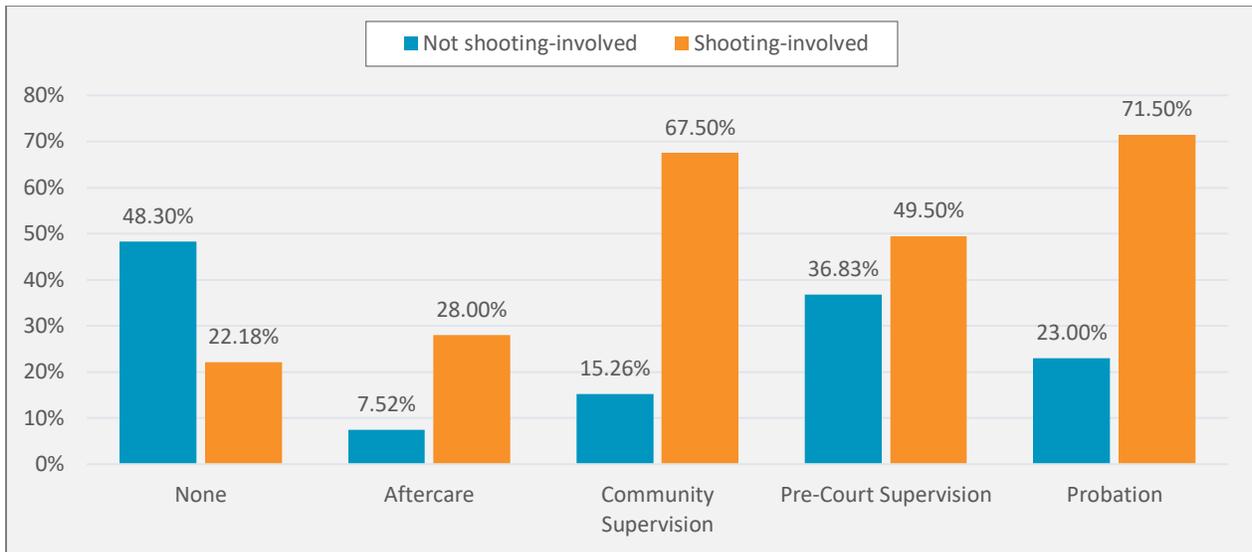


Figure 9. By the time they were involved in shootings, most youth had been under multiple forms of DJS supervision.



Youth who were involved in shootings also had much more extensive placement histories than other youth, both in 2019 and by the time they were involved in shootings. In 2019, half (49.81%) of all youth who would go on to be involved in shootings had been in detention and a plurality had been in multiple forms of residential placement, compared to fewer than 15% of youth who did not go on to be involved in shootings. These numbers continued to diverge over time, with more than half of youth having been in multiple residential placements and nonresidential placements by the time they were involved in shootings; by contrast, fewer than one-third of other youth had a residential and/or non-residential placement over time.

Table 6. In 2019, youth who would go on to be involved in shootings had much higher placement rates than other youth.

	Not shooting-involved		Shooting-involved	
	N	%	N	%
Residential placements				
Detention	1687	13.48%	128	49.81%
Electronic monitoring	1362	10.88%	107	41.63%
Statewide residential pending placement	606	4.84%	44	17.12%
Community detention	430	3.44%	38	14.79%
Committed-state facility / youth center	258	2.06%	21	8.17%
Structured shelter care (group setting)	196	1.57%	14	5.45%
Residential treatment facility	129	1.03%	11	4.28%
Substance abuse youth center	102	0.82%	5	1.95%

Intermediate academy	89	0.71%	7	2.72%
Group home	75	0.6%	4	1.56%
Therapeutic group home	72	0.58%	4	1.56%
Diagnostic units / CEU	58	0.46%	2	0.78%
Substance abuse programs	53	0.42%	1	0.39%
Psychiatric hospital	51	0.41%	1	0.39%
Committed-redirect	40	0.32%	3	1.17%
Family shelter	30	0.24%	4	1.56%
Treatment foster care	20	0.16%	2	0.78%
Enhanced academy	19	0.15%	-	-
Committed-residential / pending placement	2	0.02%	-	-
Foster care	1	0.01%	1	0.39%
Non-residential placements	N	%	N	%
Community/nonresidential	2967	23.71%	138	53.7%
Community service	138	1.1%	1	0.39%
Certificate/nonresidential	82	0.66%	3	1.17%
Committed-nonresidential	23	0.18%	5	1.95%

Table 7. By the time they were involved in shootings, most youth had been in both residential and non-residential placements.

	Not shooting-involved		Shooting-involved	
	N	%	N	%
Residential placements				
Detention	2223	17.76%	134	52.14%
Electronic monitoring	1784	14.25%	128	49.81%
Statewide residential pending placement	869	6.94%	49	19.07%
Community detention	552	4.41%	50	19.46%
Committed-state facility / youth center	449	3.59%	31	12.06%
Structured shelter care (group setting)	250	2%	17	6.61%
Residential treatment facility	232	1.85%	12	4.67%

Substance abuse youth center	110	0.88%	7	2.72%
Intermediate academy	113	0.9%	7	2.72%
Group home	130	1.04%	4	1.56%
Therapeutic group home	99	0.79%	5	1.95%
Diagnostic units / CEU	64	0.51%	2	0.78%
Substance abuse programs	112	0.89%	2	0.78%
Psychiatric hospital	73	0.58%	2	0.78%
Committed-redirect	55	0.44%	3	1.17%
Family shelter	31	0.25%	4	1.56%
Treatment foster care	26	0.21%	2	0.78%
Enhanced academy	26	0.21%	-	-
Committed-residential / pending placement	2	0.02%	-	-
Foster care	1	0.01%	1	0.39%
Non-residential placements	N	%	N	%
Community/nonresidential	4132	33.02%	165	64.20%
Community service	171	1.37%	1	0.39%
Certificate/nonresidential	161	1.29%	5	1.95%
Committed-nonresidential	25	0.2%	5	1.95%

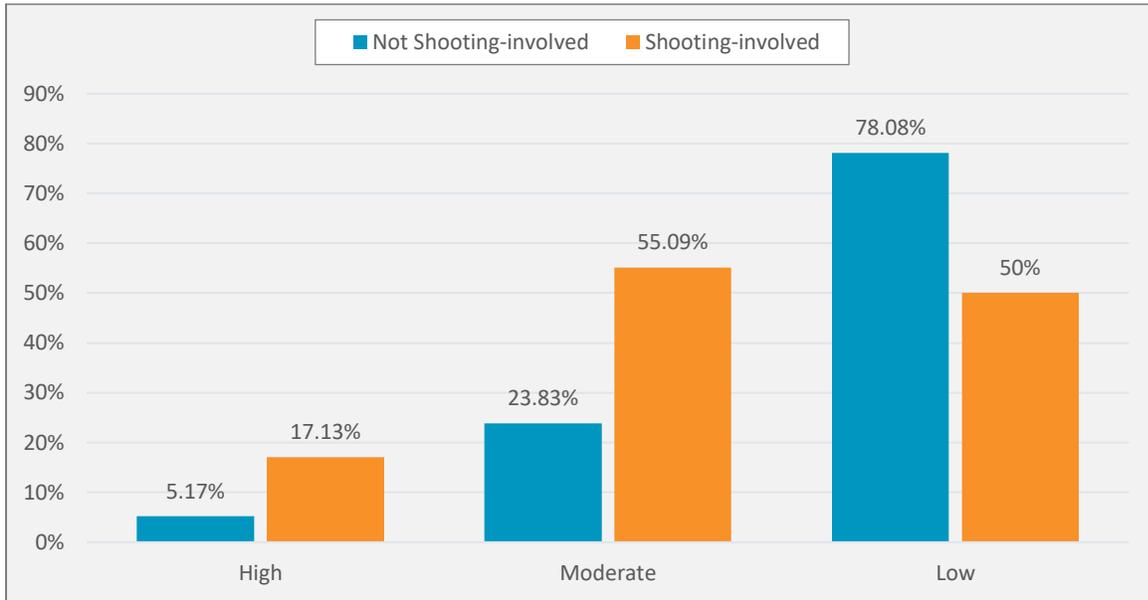
Risk Assessment Scores

Maryland DJS uses two different risk assessment tools to guide decision making with youth, each of which is used at a different point in the delinquency process. The detention risk assessment is used when youth are referred to DJS to inform the decision of whether to detain a youth while his/her case is resolved. If a youth is adjudicated delinquent, DJS uses the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment and Service Planning (MCASP) to inform subsequent placement and supervision decisions. While almost all youth are assessed using the former, only youth who are adjudicated delinquent receive the latter assessment. Unsurprisingly, youth who were involved in shootings were assessed as higher risk than other youth in both tools; also unsurprisingly, by the time they were involved in a shooting, these youths' risk profiles had increased on both tools.

At the time of their 2019 petitions, the majority (55.09%) of youth who would go onto be involved in a shooting were assessed as moderate risk on the detention assessment, while

78.08% of other youth were assessed as low risk. Although relatively few youth in either group were assessed as high risk, youth who would go on to be involved in shootings were three times more likely to be assessed high risk (17.13% versus 5.17%, Figure 10).

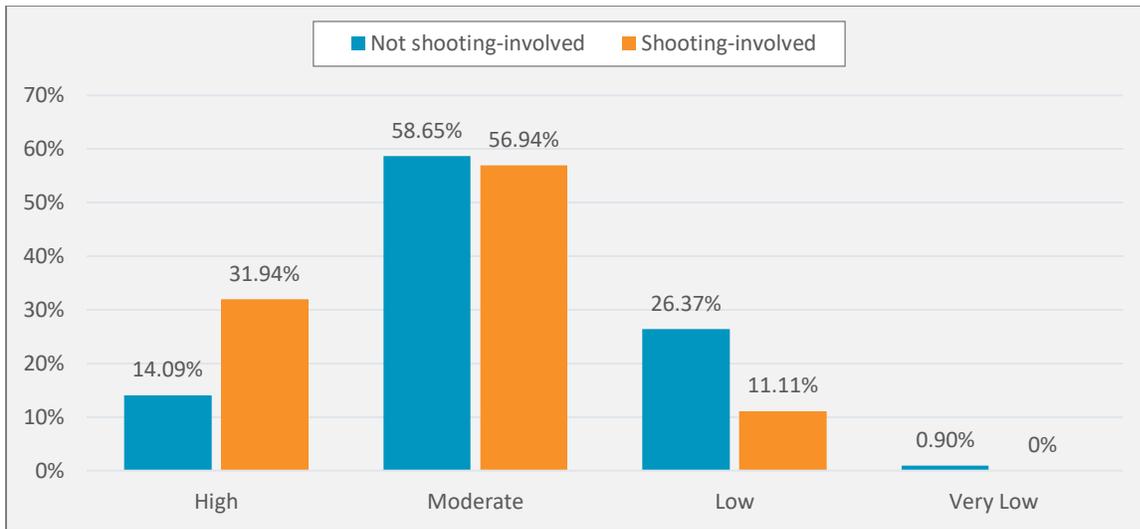
Figure 10. At the time of their 2019 complaints, youth who would go on to be involved in a shooting were already higher risk on the detention assessment than other youth, although few were high risk.¹¹



Because DJS transitioned to using a new detention risk assessment instrument in 2021, it is not possible to make direct comparisons between youths' scores in 2019 and those in 2023. Nonetheless, the discrepancy between youth who were involved in shootings and those who were not increased in both high- and low-risk determinations, with youth who were involved in shootings becoming more likely to be assessed as high risk (31.94%) and less likely to be to be assessed as low risk (11.11%, Figure 11).

¹¹ Percentages total more than 100% because some youth had been assessed multiple times at the time of their 2019 complaints.

Figure 11. Most youth in both groups were assessed as moderate risk in a later detention risk assessment.



Although patterns on the MCASP assessment are not as dramatic, they similarly showed elevated assessed risk profiles among youth who would go on to be involved in shootings, both in 2019 and again at the time of the shooting incidents. In 2019, almost one quarter (23.53%) of these youth were assessed as very high risk, compared to fewer than 15% (14.93%) of other youth. The percentage of youth assessed as very high risk had increased to 27.34% by the time they were involved in shootings. Moreover, because the MCASP is only used following an adjudication, these scores likely underestimate the diverging trends among these groups, as far more youth who were involved in shootings had been adjudicated delinquent—and for more incidents—than youth who were not involved in shootings.

Figure 12. In 2019, youth who would go on to be involved in shootings were already assessed as higher risk than other youth on the MCASP.

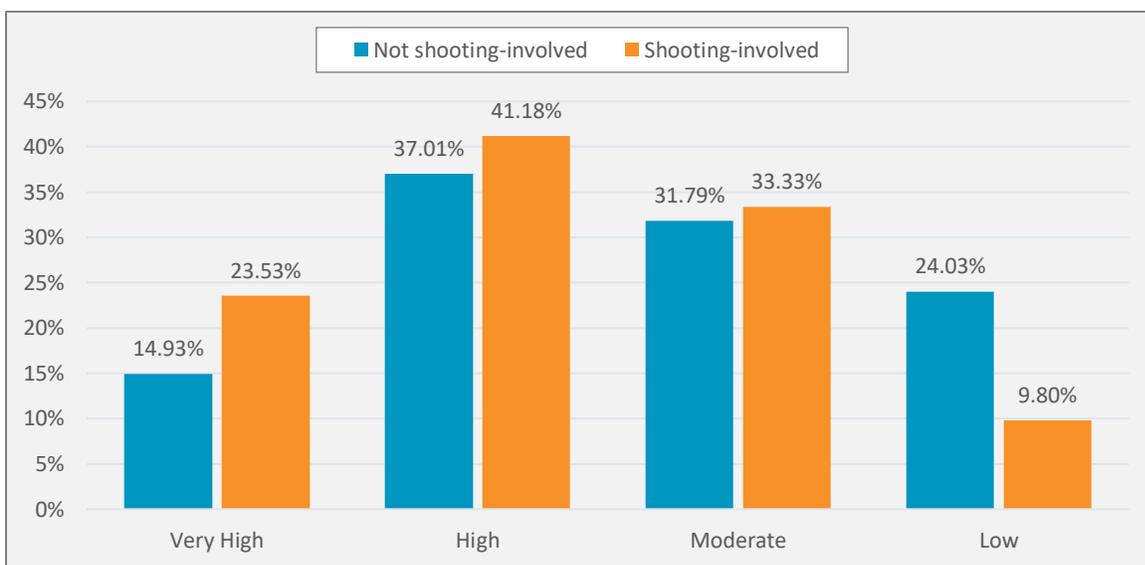
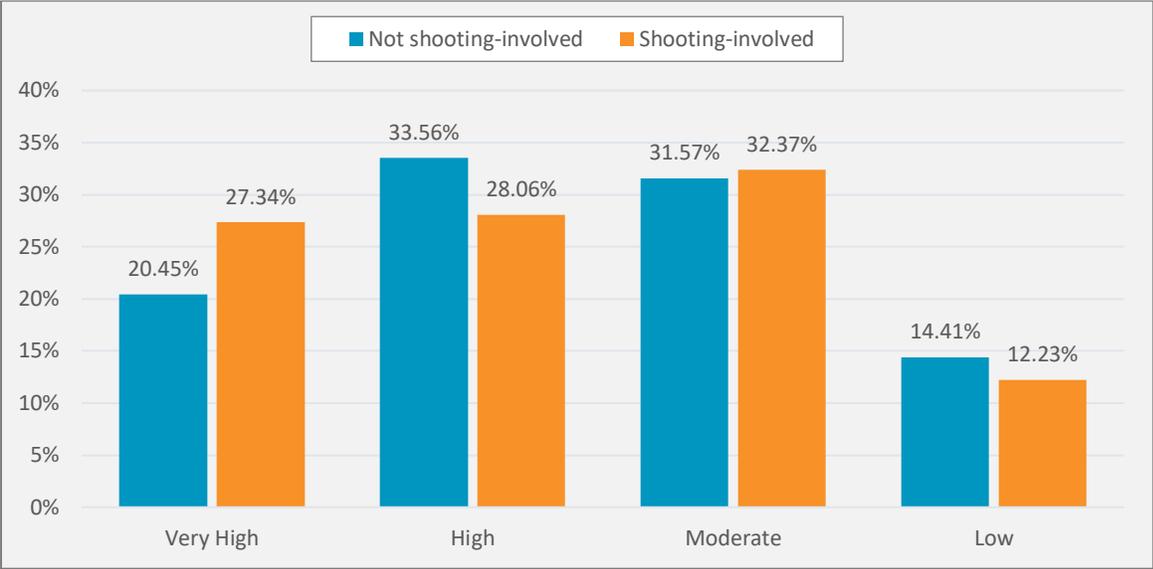


Figure 13. By 2023, the percentage of youth involved in shootings who were assessed as very high risk on the MCASP had increased, although there was also an increase among other youth.



III. Youth on DJS Supervision at the Time of a Shooting

Recognizing that DJS has the greatest opportunity to intervene with those youth who are under active DJS supervision, this section examines the characteristics of young people who were being actively supervised when they were involved in a shooting. In contrast to the prior sections of this report, which draw only on administrative data to quantitatively examine patterns among youth involved in shootings, this section also includes an analysis of case files of young people under DSJ supervision. Specifically, this section includes a review and analysis of 44 young people who were involved in shootings in 2023 while under the supervision of DJS.

Because the young people whose case files were reviewed include those not in the administrative data (and vice versa), and because the content of case files necessarily differs from the administrative data available in quantitative datasets, these analyses are presented separately. Taken together, however, they present a reasonably comprehensive picture of the young people who have been involved in shootings in Maryland and should enable DJS to better identify those who remain at risk.

Quantitative Findings

Almost two-thirds of the youth who were under DJS supervision at the time of a shooting (97 out of 165) were on probation, followed by 51 who were on aftercare. The remaining 17 were under a variety of forms of supervision, including community detention/electronic monitoring, pre-court supervision, and evening reporting. As this section will show, the characteristics of these youth almost exactly mirror those of the young people involved in shootings described above.¹² Also like the youth involved in shootings discussed in Section II above, this analysis found no meaningful differences between youth who were victims of shootings and those who were accused of shooting others, in terms of demographics, geography, or prior delinquency system contact; consequently, the analysis in this section does not distinguish between youth who were victims and those who were suspects. This breakdown is available in Appendix B.

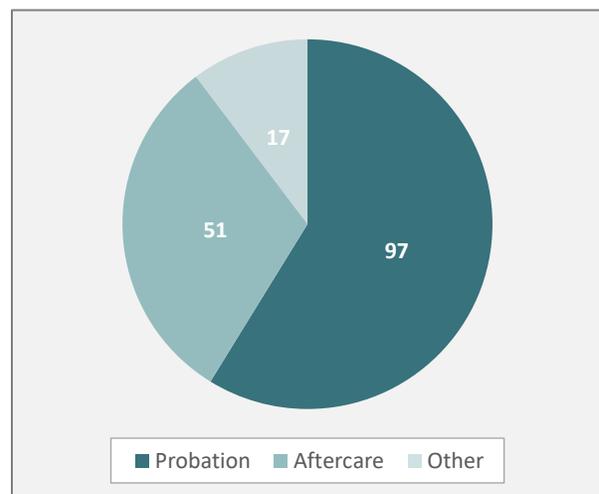


Figure 14. Most youth under DJS supervision at the time of a shooting were on probation.

¹² There is substantial overlap between these two groups, with 112 youth referred to DJS in 2019 and under DJS supervision at the time they were involved in a shooting. This constitutes 43.24% of the shooting-involved youth in Section II and 67.87% of the youth under DJS supervision in Section III. Given the overlap, the similarities are not totally unexpected, although the near-identical results are noteworthy given the number of youth who are not in both groups.

Demographics

Consistent with findings in the prior two sections, the majority of youth who were under DJS supervision at the time of a shooting were Black boys. More than half (59.15%) were ages 16 or 17, and almost half (46.24%) lived in Baltimore City.

Table 8. Black boys constitute the majority of youth involved in shootings.

Race/Ethnicity	Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%
Black	141	85.45%	3	1.82%
Latino	8	4.85%	-	-
White	12	7.27%	-	-
Unknown	1	0.61%	-	-

Table 9. Most youth under supervision who are involved in shootings are 16 or 17 years old.

Age	N	%
13	2	1.21%
14	3	1.81%
15	11	6.67%
16	29	17.58%
17	45	27.27%
18	42	25.45%
19-21 ¹³	33	20.00%
Mean	17.3	

¹³ As noted above, DJS has some youth over 18 on their caseloads if the young people were adjudicated before their 18th birthdays or adjudicated as adults for incidents that occurred before they turned 18. As a result, a small percentage of DJS's caseload are over 18 years old, which accounts for the fact that even though 18-21 year olds are involved in significantly more shootings than juveniles, it is not apparent in this analysis because it only accounts for the very small percentage of 18-21 year olds under DJS supervision (or known to DJS).

Table 10. Almost half of youth under supervision at the time of a shooting live in Baltimore City.

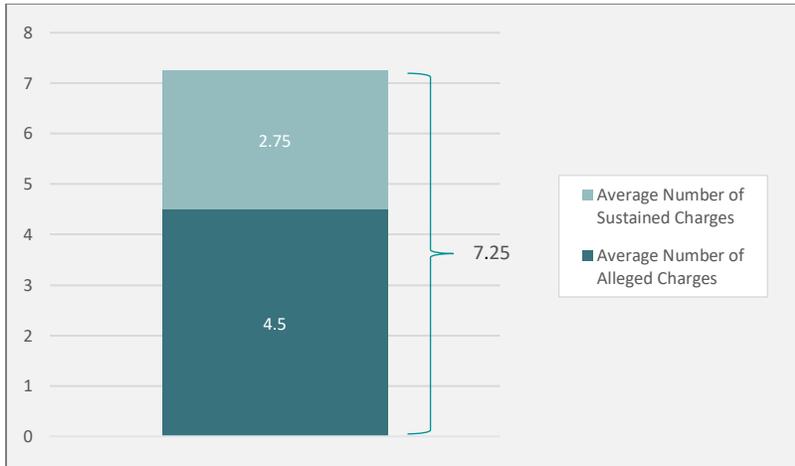
Jurisdiction	N	%
Baltimore City	78	46.64%
Anne Arundel County	21	12.50%
Prince George’s County	19	11.75%
Baltimore County	14	8.58%
Montgomery County	9	5.59%
Washington County	4	2.44%
Wicomico County	3	1.82%
Harford County	3	1.80%
Howard County	3	1.77%
Washington, DC	2	1.26%
Dorchester County	2	1.19%
Worcester County	2	1.11%
Out of state	1	0.63%
Cecil County	1	0.62%
Caroline County	1	0.59%
Charles County	1	0.58%
Carroll County	1	0.57%
Frederick County	1	0.57%

Delinquency System Contact

Petitions and Adjudications

Youth who were under DJS supervision when involved in a shooting had, on average, 7.25 prior petitions filed, of which 2.75 had been sustained. This closely mirrors the shooting-involved youth in the prior analysis, who had an average of 6 petitions filed prior to being involved in a shooting, with 2.7 of these petitions having been sustained.

Figure 15. Youth had an average of 7.25 petitions of which 2.75 had been sustained.



In addition to having had several prior petitions and adjudications, the majority of these young people had multiple prior charges for some amount of violent conduct, with more than three-fourths (76.63%) having had at least one petition filed for a felony crime of violence and more than 90% (90.3%) having had a petition filed for a person-to-person misdemeanor. Almost a third (31.52%) had a petition filed for a violation of probation. In addition, more than a third (35.42%) were adjudicated for a felony crime of violence, more than half (52.08%) for a person-to-person misdemeanor, and almost a third (31.25%) for a violation of probation. Many young people were adjudicated for all of these.

Figure 16. Three-fourths of youth had a petition for a felony crime of violence prior to being involved in a shooting.

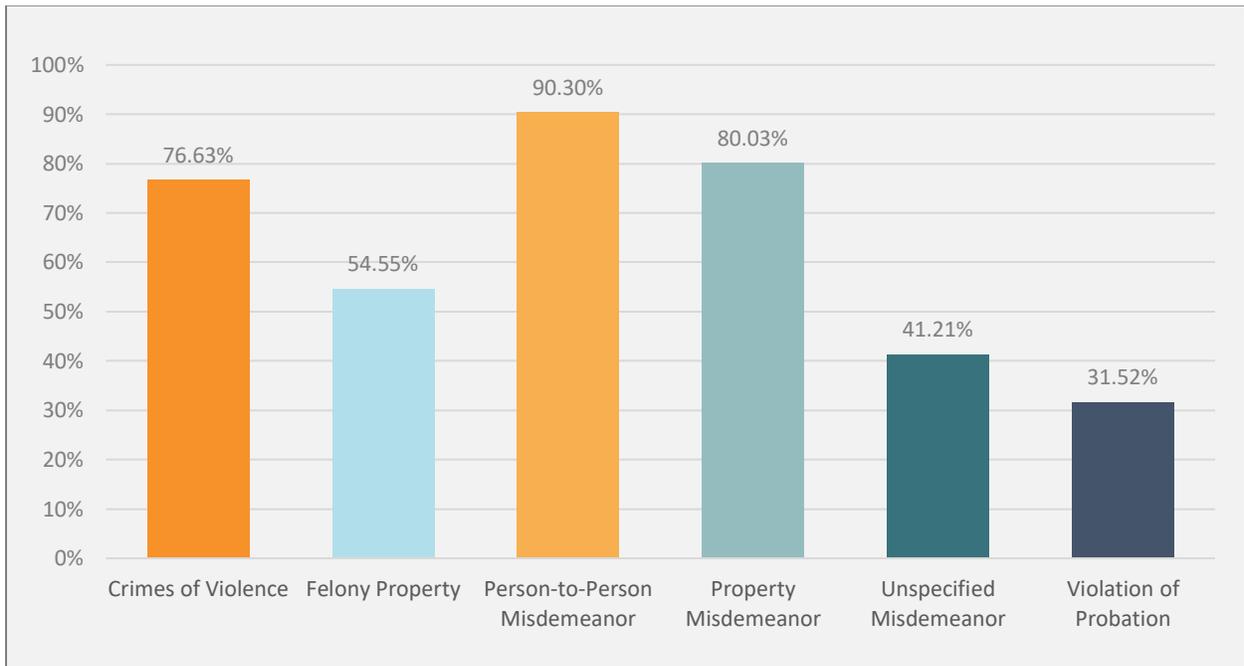
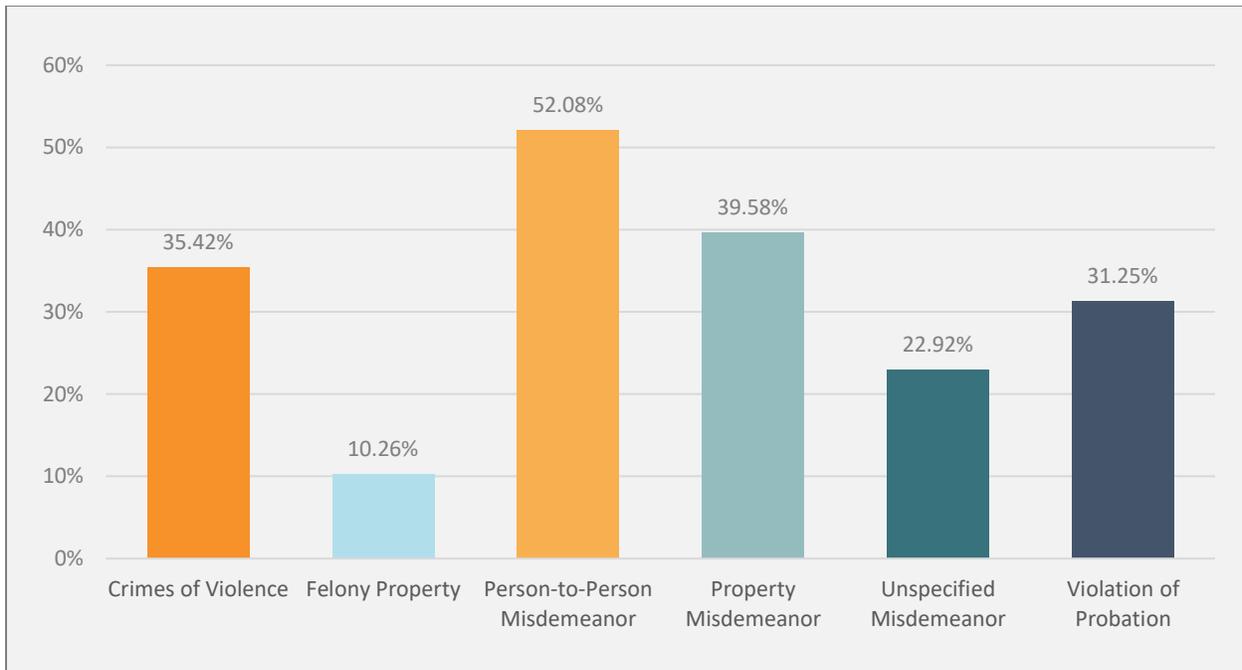


Figure 17. One-third of youth had an adjudication for a felony crime of violence before being involved in a shooting.



Supervision and Placement History

Consistent with the fact that the majority of DJS-supervised youth involved in shootings had multiple petitions and adjudications prior to those shootings, most of these young people had also been under multiple forms of DJS supervision by that time. The majority had been under both probation supervision (86.5%) and community detention (79.14%), with sizeable pluralities also having been supervised pre-adjudication via pre-court supervision (41.72%) and/or following release from DJS custody via aftercare (34.36%). Most had also been in multiple placements, including both pre- and post-adjudication placements and residential and community placements. Three-fourths (74.55%) of these youth had been in detention, 70.3% on electronic monitoring, and 87.88% in a community/non-residential placement. Moreover, between a fifth and a third had been in some form of statewide placement. Taken together, these data indicate that many of the young people had clearly been identified as being at risk.

Figure 18. By the time they were involved in shootings, most youth had been under multiple forms of DJS supervision.

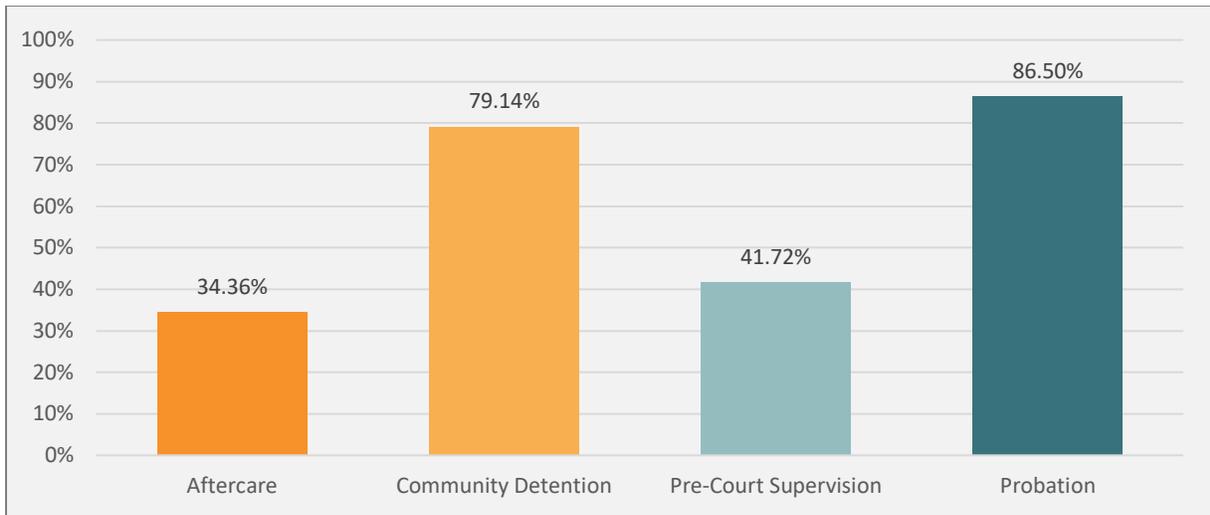


Table 11. The majority of youth had both residential and non-residential placements by the time they were involved in shootings.

Residential placements	N	%
Detention	123	74.55%
Electronic monitoring	116	70.30%
Statewide residential pending placement	47	28.48%
Community detention	56	33.94%
Committed- state facility / youth center	30	18.18%
Structured shelter care (group setting)	18	10.91%
Residential treatment facility	8	4.85%
Substance abuse youth center	6	3.64%
Intermediate academy	9	5.45%
Group home	5	3.03%
Therapeutic group home	6	3.64%
Diagnostic units / CEU	3	1.82%
Substance abuse programs	3	1.82%
Committed-redirect	3	1.82%
Family shelter	3	1.82%
Treatment foster care	1	0.61%

Enhanced academy	1	0.61%
Non-residential placements	N	%
Community/nonresidential	145	87.88%
Community service	1	0.61%
Certificate/nonresidential	10	6.06%
Committed-nonresidential	4	2.42%

Risk Assessment Scores

Youths’ scores on DJS’s two validated risk assessment instruments further reflect that many young people were very clearly at risk by the time they were involved in shootings. Almost one-third (30.51%) of youths’ most recent detention risk assessments resulted in them being scored as high risk, while an additional 60% (57.63%) were determined to be moderate risk, which is the second highest risk category for this tool. Taken together with the almost 75% of youth who had previously been detained, this makes clear that a large proportion of the youth would have been recommended for secure detention. Post-adjudication MCASP scores had similar results, with a majority of youth being scored high (38.22%) or very high (19.11%) risk to recidivate.

Figure 19. At their most recent detention assessment prior to being involved in a shooting, most youth were assessed as moderate risk, and almost one-third were high risk.

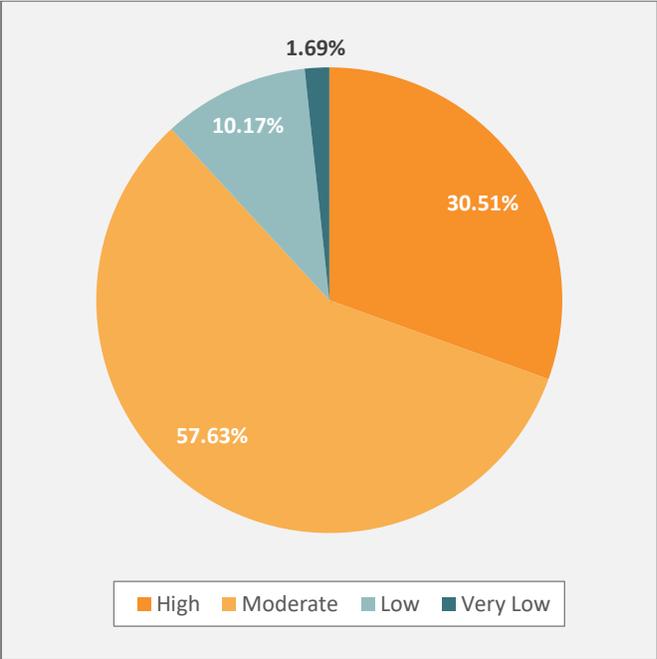
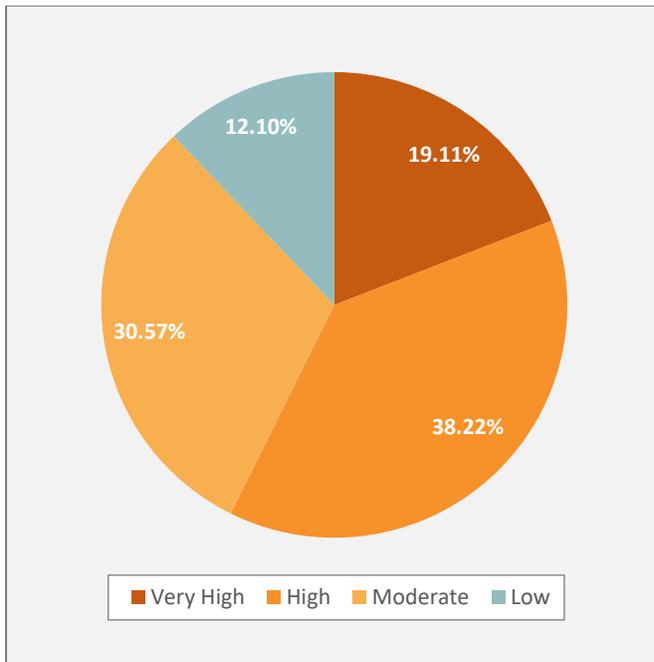


Figure 20. At the time of their most recent MCASP assessments, most youth were assessed as high or very high risk.



Case File Reviews

To better understand the dynamics of shootings involving youth under the care of DJS, NICJR reviewed the case files of 44 youth who were involved in shootings in 2023 while under DJS supervision. The cases reviewed included 27 youth who were victims of gun violence, 16 who were suspects in shootings, and one young person who was a witness of a shooting involving other youth.

All of the young people included in this analysis were between the ages of 12 and 19 at the time of the shooting, with 79% falling between the ages of 16 and 18. Among the 41 youth with available race/ethnicity information, 35 (85.4%) were Black; 93.2% were male (41 out of 44). The majority of youth lived in Baltimore City, with smaller numbers living in surrounding areas including Baltimore County, Silver Spring, Essex, and Edgewood. While nearly half of the shootings took place in Baltimore City, there were other areas impacted by gun violence, including the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Prince George's, and Wicomico.

Reviewing the files of these young people underscores the myriad challenges most face, including experiences of trauma, difficult family dynamics, academic struggles, and behavioral health needs. A number of young people had experienced a traumatic loss, including three youth who had lost a parent and one who had lost multiple friends to gun violence prior to the shooting incident. Moreover, the prevalence of these types of loss is likely much higher than our analysis revealed, since DJS Case Management Specialists tended to only note important events that occurred while youth were on supervision, not those that had occurred previously in their lives.

In addition to many youth having experienced serious loss, many were from single-parent households or living with extended family members. Two youth were under foster care guardianship. Often, youth who resided with their extended families did so because their parents needed additional assistance managing the youth or other issues in the households. For example, one young person lived with eight siblings, and another had physically assaulted a sibling, leading his parents to contact Child Protective Services to find alternative living solutions.

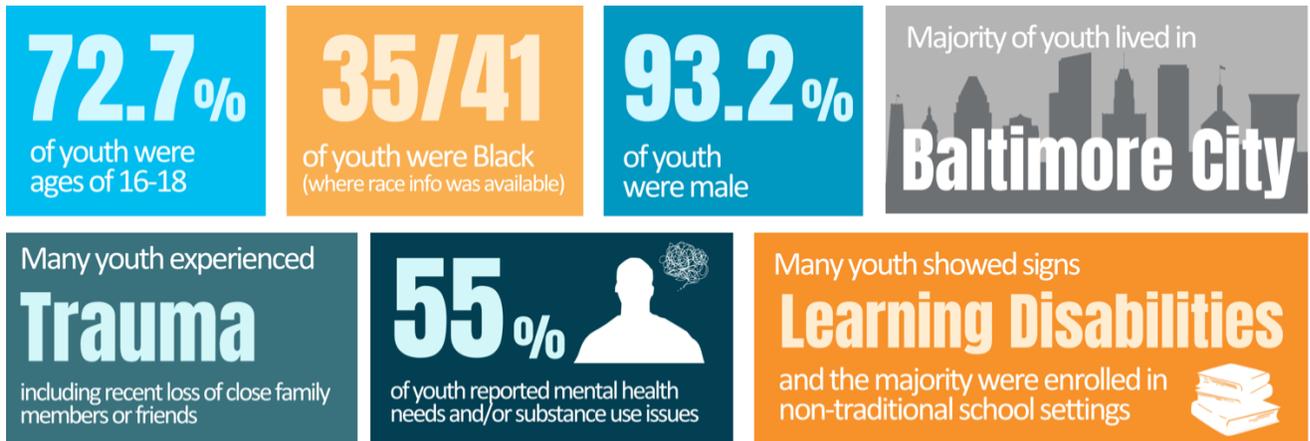
Many of the youth showed signs of learning disabilities and other difficulties related to education. The majority were enrolled in non-traditional school settings, including alternative schools, online schools, or evening curriculum academies. In addition, most had truancy issues and were performing poorly academically. There were several instances where youth wanted to return to traditional schools but could not due to previous behavioral incidents, lack of transportation, poor grades, and specific learning needs. In some cases, youth were moved to different schools by parents or CMS workers due to safety issues at their prior schools. Sometimes, the families had scheduling and transportation challenges that prevented them from completing the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

Fifty-five percent of the youth reported having mental health needs and/or substance use issues. The majority of the mental health diagnoses were ADHD; however, depression was a common diagnosis, and one youth had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Some degree of cannabis use disorder and/or dependency was also very common.

At least half of the youth in this analysis had been petitioned but their cases had not yet been resolved for one arrest when they were arrested again for another, more serious incident. In almost all cases, the court then dismissed the original petition following the filing of the new one.¹⁴ For some youth, this happened several times. As a result, months or even years passed between young people being petitioned and being adjudicated, which meant that there was an even longer period of time between when a young person was arrested and when he/she began to receive any kind of community-based services. This was further exacerbated by the lengthy delays between adjudication and delivery of court-ordered services. In the meantime, conflicts escalated, and young people's lives remained at risk. These practices run contrary to the evidence that swift and certain sanctions are most effective to curb delinquent behavior.

¹⁴ This also explains why the quantitative data show that youth with multiple serious petitions have far fewer adjudications.

Figure 21. Deep Dive on 44 DJS Youth Involved in Gun Violence in 2023



Conclusion

The data are clear. Only a small percentage of young people who come into contact with Maryland’s delinquency system are likely to be involved in shootings. Among a subset of youth, however, this risk is much higher. Black boys ages 16–18 who live in Baltimore City, have approximately six delinquency petitions and two adjudications, and score high or very high on at least one of DJS’s two validated risk assessment instruments constitute a very small proportion of youth known to DJS and a very high proportion of those who shoot or get shot. Moreover, as our case file reviews make clear, most of these young people have an array of other risk factors that are known to their case managers. These include academic struggles, mental health issues, substance use disorders, and trauma. Using this knowledge, DJS can and should identify these youth and intervene immediately and intensively.

Appendix A. Comparison Group Youth Involved in Shootings, Broken Down by Suspects and Victims

Race and Ethnicity

Table A.1. The majority of shooting suspects and victims are Black boys.

	Suspects				Victims			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Race/Ethnicity	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black	72	80.00%	2	2.22%	138	82.63%	9	5.39%
Latino	8	8.89%	1	1.11%	6	3.59%	-	0%
White	7	7.78%	-	0%	11	6.59%	1	0.60%
Unknown	-	0%	-	0%	1	0.60%	1	0.60%
Total	87	96.67%	3	3.33%	156	93.41%	11	6.59%

Age at Time of Shooting

Table A.2. The majority of suspects and victims are 17 to 18 years old.

Age	Suspects		Victims	
	N	%	N	%
<10	-	0%	-	0%
10	-	0%	-	0%
11	1	1.11%	-	0%
12	-	0%	-	0%
13	1	1.11%	2	1.20%
14	4	4.44%	4	2.40%
15	5	5.56%	17	10.18%
16	19	21.11%	30	17.96%
17	32	35.56%	52	31.14%
18	24	26.67%	52	31.14%

19-20 ¹⁵	4	4.44%	10	5.99%
Mean	16.82		16.94	

Prior Alleged and Sustained Petitions

Table A.3. Suspects and victims had comparable numbers of prior alleged and sustained delinquency petitions.

	Suspects	Victims
Number of youth with alleged complaints	91	171
Number of complaints	582	997
Average number of complaints per youth	6.4	5.83
Number of youth with sustained complaints	63	111
Percentage of youth with sustained complaints	69.23%	64.91%
Number of sustained complaints	176	292
Average number of sustained complaints per youth	2.79	2.63

Table A. 4. The majority of shooting suspects and victims had prior petitions for person-to-person misdemeanors, property misdemeanors, and felony crimes of violence.

Petition Type	Suspects		Victims	
	N	%	N	%
Person-to-person misdemeanor	76	84.44%	140	83.83%
Property misdemeanor	72	80%	120	71.86%
Crime of violence	60	66.67%	99	59.28%
Property felony	40	44.44%	67	40.12%
Unspecified misdemeanor	30	33.33%	56	33.53%
Violation of probation	18	20%	34	20.36%
Drug felony	10	11.11%	31	18.56%
Drug misdemeanor	17	18.89%	29	17.37%

¹⁵ As noted above, DJS has some youth over 18 on their caseloads if the young people were adjudicated before their 18th birthdays or adjudicated as adults for incidents that occurred before they turned 18. As a result, a small percentage of DJS's caseload are over 18 years old, which accounts for the fact that even though 18-21 year olds are involved in significantly more shootings than juveniles, it is not apparent in this analysis because it only accounts for the very small percentage of 18-21 year olds under DJS supervision (or known to DJS).

Citations	19	21.11%	26	15.57%
Unspecified felony	13	14.44%	21	12.57%
Ordinance offense	5	5.56%	13	7.78%
Person-to-person felony	13	14.44%	7	4.19%
Child in need of services (CINS)	4	4.44%	5	2.99%
Not applicable	2	2.22%	3	1.8%

Sustained Petitions at the Time of the Shooting

Table A.5. Approximately half of both suspects and victims had a sustained petition for a person-to-person misdemeanor and about one-third of each group had a sustained petition for a felony crime of violence.

Petition Type	Suspects		Victims	
	N	%	N	%
Person-to-person misdemeanor	33	53.23%	52	48.06%
Property misdemeanor	29	46.77%	40	37.38%
Crime of violence	22	35.48%	33	30.84%
Property felony	6	9.68%	11	10.28%
Unspecified misdemeanor	9	14.52%	17	15.89%
Violation of probation	11	17.74%	27	25.23%
Drug felony	4	6.45%	6	5.61%
Drug misdemeanor	3	4.84%	13	12.15%
Citations	1	1.61%	2	1.87%
Unspecified felony	9	14.52%	18	16.82%
Ordinance offense	1	1.61%	2	1.87%
Person-to-person felony	3	4.84%	-	0%

Appendix B. Youth Under DJS Supervision, Broken Down by Victims and Suspects

Race and Ethnicity

Table B.1. The majority of shooting suspects and victims under DJS supervision are Black boys.

Race/Ethnicity	Suspects				Victims			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black	54	80.60%	1	1.49%	87	88.78%	2	2.04%
Latino	4	5.97%	-	0%	4	4.08%	-	-
White	8	11.94%	-	0%	4	4.08%	-	-
Unknown	-	0%	-	0%	1	1.02%	-	-
Total	66	99%	1	1.49%	96	97.96%	2	2.04%

Age at Time of Shooting

Table B.2. The majority of shooting suspects and victims under DJS supervision are 17 to 18 years old.

Age	Suspects		Victims	
	N	%	N	%
13	1	1.49%	1	1.03%
14	2	2.99%	1	1.03%
15	2	2.99%	9	9.28%
16	13	19.40%	16	16.49%
17	20	29.85%	25	25.77%
18	18	26.87%	24	24.74%
19-21 ¹⁶	11	16.42%	22	22.68%
Mean	17.51		17.34	

¹⁶ As noted above, DJS has some youth over 18 on their caseloads if the young people were adjudicated before their 18th birthdays or adjudicated as adults for incidents that occurred before they turned 18. As a result, a small percentage of DJS's caseload are over 18 years old, which accounts for the fact that even though 18-21 year olds are involved in significantly more shootings than juveniles, it is not apparent in this analysis because it only accounts for the very small percentage of 18-21 year olds under DJS supervision (or known to DJS).

Prior Alleged and Sustained Petitions

Table B.3. Shooting suspects under DJS supervision had slightly more complaints than victims, but both groups had similar numbers of sustained complaints.

	Suspects	Victims
Number of youth with alleged complaints	67	98
Number of complaints	540	666
Average number of complaints per youth	8.06	6.80
Number of youth with sustained complaints	64	92
Percentage of youth with sustained complaints	95.52%	93.88%
Number of sustained complaints	185	246
Average number of sustained complaints per youth	2.89	2.67

Table B.4. The majority of suspects and victims under DJS supervision had petitions for person-to-person misdemeanors and felony crimes of violence.

Petition Type	Suspects		Victims	
	N	%	N	%
Person-to-person misdemeanor	60	89.55%	89	90.82%
Property misdemeanor	58	86.57%	79	80.61%
Crime of violence	52	77.61%	74	75.51%
Property felony	37	55.22%	53	54.08%
Unspecified misdemeanor	31	46.27%	37	37.76%
Violation of probation	21	31.34%	31	31.63%
Drug felony	8	11.94%	23	23.47%
Drug misdemeanor	14	20.9%	23	23.47%
Citations	20	29.85%	13	13.27%
Unspecified felony	14	20.9%	20	20.41%
Ordinance offense	3	4.48%	6	6.12%
Person-to-person felony	9	13.43%	7	7.14%
CINS	4	5.97%	2	2.04%
Not applicable	2	2.99%	4	4.08%

Table B.5. Approximately half of suspects and victims under DJS supervision had sustained petitions for person-to-person misdemeanors; approximately one-third of each group had sustained petitions for felony crimes of violence.

Petition Type	Suspects		Victims	
	N	%	N	%
Person-to-person misdemeanor	35	54.69%	45	48.91%
Property misdemeanor	34	53.13%	31	33.70%
Crime of violence	22	34.38%	33	35.87%
Property felony	7	10.94%	9	9.78%
Unspecified misdemeanor	9	14.06%	16	17.39%
Violation of probation	13	20.31%	25	27.17%
Drug felony	4	6.25%	5	5.43%
Drug misdemeanor	3	4.69%	9	9.78%
Citations	1	1.56%	1	1.09%
Unspecified felony	10	15.63%	11	11.96%
Ordinance offense	1	1.56%	-	0%
Person-to-person felony	2	3.13%	-	0%

Appendix C. Child Fatalities in Baltimore City, 2016-2020

Figure 22. Table from “Child Fatalities in Baltimore City, 2016-2020” ¹⁷

93%	Homicide committed with a gun
89%	Chronically absent from school
69%	Charged in the juvenile justice system
62%	Received mental health treatment
40%	Suspended from school at least twice in one year
27%	Prior victim of a nonfatal shooting or stabbing
27%	Received substance use disorder treatment
24%	Victim of child maltreatment

¹⁷ [Child Fatalities in Baltimore City, 2016-2020: Recommendations for Prevention](#)



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