

Gun Violence Reduction in **TENNESSEE**

An Overview and Assessment



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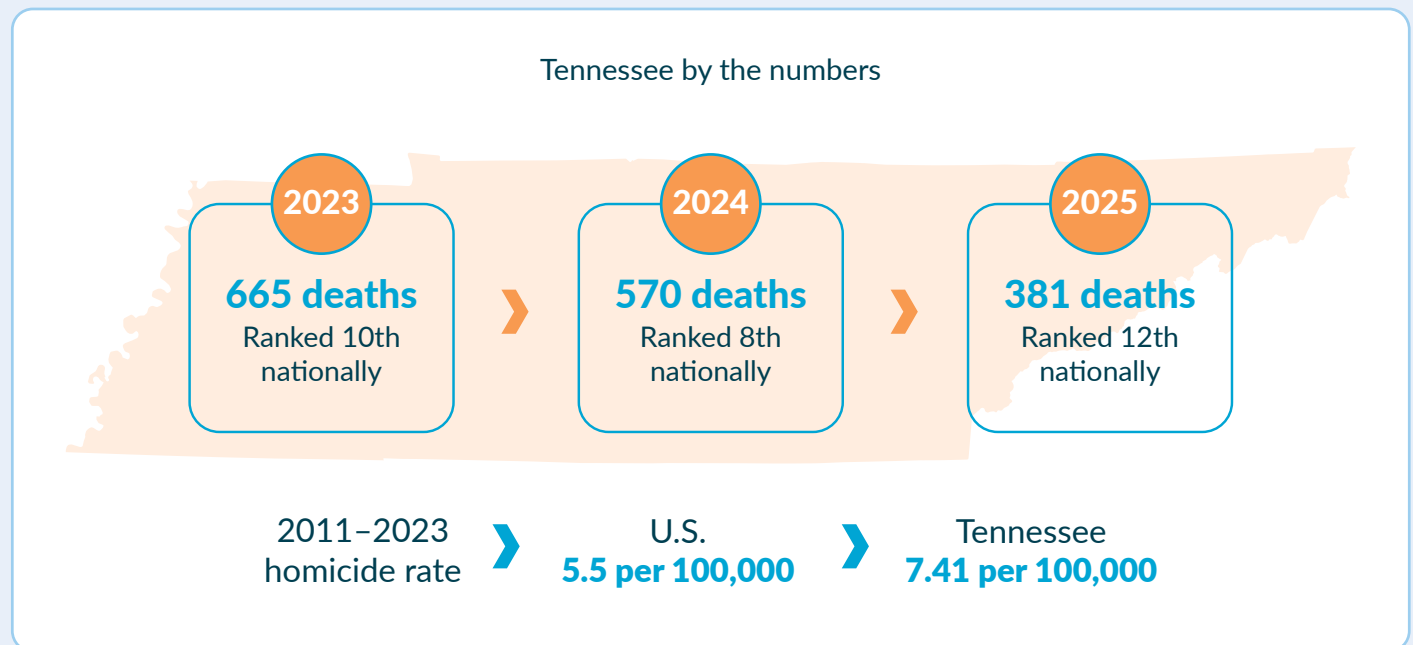
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Introduction

In recent years, Tennessee’s ranking among the nation’s deadliest states for gun violence has fluctuated alongside a steady decline in total fatalities. Based on data obtained from the Gun Violence Archive (GVA), in 2023, the state ranked tenth nationally, with 665 gun-related deaths.¹ While the total number of homicides dropped to 570 in 2024, Tennessee’s relative standing worsened to eighth deadliest. However, by 2025, the state saw a significant improvement, falling to twelfth place as gun homicides decreased further to 381. Between 2011 and 2023, the national homicide rate stood at 5.5 per 100,000 people, while Tennessee’s rate was significantly higher, at 7.41 per 100,000.

Across Tennessee, a powerful network of organizations and initiatives has emerged, with a primary focus on reducing violence through data-driven strategies, community engagement, and direct intervention. Many of these groups and initiatives operate at the intersection of community safety and social services, working to break cycles of harm by addressing root causes of violence such as trauma, lack of economic opportunity, and systemic instability.

This report highlights violence reduction efforts and how they work in cities across the state. It begins with an overview of gun violence trends across Tennessee over the last five years, with a focus on the state’s four largest cities (Memphis, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville), followed by a discussion of statewide initiatives to respond to and reduce gun violence. The report then dives deep into specific initiatives and collaborative programs currently active within Memphis (Shelby County), Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville. Lastly, the report closes with reflections on how the work throughout Tennessee can move forward.



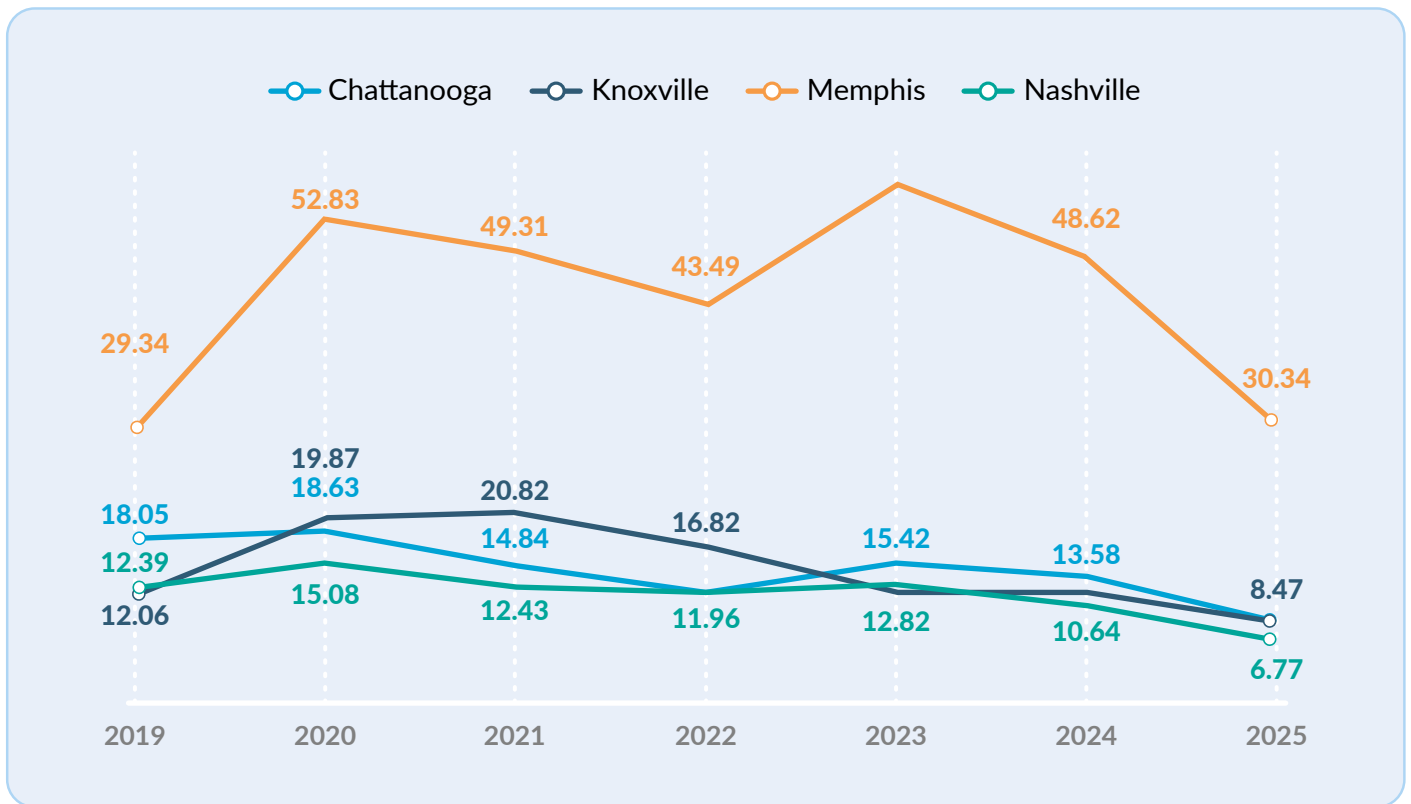
¹ Gun Violence Archive data

Gun Violence at a Glance Across Major Cities Within Tennessee

Homicides Across Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville, 2019–2025

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Chattanooga	33	34	27	22	29	26	17
Knoxville	22	38	40	33	24	23	17
Memphis	191	332	307	269	349	297	184
Nashville	83	104	84	82	89	75	48

Homicide Rate Across Cities, 2019 - 2025 (per 100,000)



From 2019 to 2025, Tennessee’s major metropolitan areas followed a remarkably similar trajectory: a pandemic spike followed by a steady, and in some cases record-breaking, decline in gun violence. Between 2019 and 2020, both Memphis and Knoxville saw staggering increases in homicides, roughly 73%, while Nashville experienced a 25% surge. Chattanooga saw a more modest 3% rise in homicides during the same period, though its nonfatal shootings jumped by 39%.

Following these peaks, the cities began to see a gradual stabilization that resulted in significant breakthroughs by 2025. Memphis, which averaged 288 homicides annually from 2021 to 2025, recorded the lowest number of homicides in 2025, with 184 incidents. Memphis also achieved a massive 38% decrease in shooting incidents in 2025, with 643 incidents—400 fewer than the previous year. Similarly, Nashville saw its 2024 spike of 90 homicides plummet by 51% in 2025, reaching a low of 44 homicides, while also experiencing a 42% reduction in nonfatal shootings.

The downward trend was even more pronounced in Knoxville and Chattanooga, both of which reached historic lows in 2025. Knoxville saw its homicides decrease from a 2020–2024 average of 34 to just 17, while nonfatal shootings fell from 41 to 33. Chattanooga went from a high of 119 nonfatal shootings in 2021 to a record low of 40 shooting incidents by 2025. The city also went from a record high of 34 fatal shootings to 17 fatal shootings in the same period. While these reductions are encouraging, there is more work to be done; based on statewide homicide data obtained from the Gun Violence Archive, Tennessee has still ranked as one of the deadliest states in the country in recent years.

State-Level Violence Reduction Initiatives

In 2023, Governor Bill Lee established two major public safety initiatives to combat violent crime and urban instability: the Violent Crime Intervention Fund (VCIF) and the Downtown Public Safety Grant. Application processes for both programs officially opened in 2025.²

Through a \$75 million allocation, the VCIF is empowering county law enforcement agencies to implement evidence-based intervention programs, upgrade crime-fighting technology, and fund the specialized training and hiring of violent crime units. Eligibility is strictly tied to geography, targeting agencies that oversee at least one of the fifty Tennessee zip codes that recorded the highest homicide numbers between 2018 and 2022. Notably, participating sheriff's departments are required to enter into a 287(g) agreement with the federal government, which requires them to enforce immigration laws as a condition of this funding from the Office of Criminal Justice Programs.^{3,4}

Complementing these law enforcement efforts, the Governor designated \$100 million for the Downtown Public Safety Grant. This initiative prioritizes the revitalization of urban corridors in Nashville, Memphis, Chattanooga, and Knoxville by funding efforts to reduce blight and enhance economic development infrastructure. By supporting both local governments and Business Improvement District Management Corporations, the grant aims to create safer, more vibrant downtown environments across the state's primary metropolitan hubs.



² [Violent Crime Intervention Fund](#)

³ [Bills requiring Tennessee sheriffs to cooperate with ICE advance](#)

⁴ [Violent Crime Intervention Fund](#)

Gun Violence Trends And Responses Across Tennessee Cities

Across Tennessee, initiatives have emerged with the primary focus of reducing violence by addressing its root causes. The following sections provide a more in-depth look at gun violence trends and specific initiatives implemented to tackle violence in Memphis, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville.

Memphis

Gun Violence Trends in Memphis



In 2025, NICJR conducted a Memphis Gun Violence Problem Analysis (GVPA) that reviewed 890 gun homicide incidents occurring from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024, and 1,386 nonfatal injury shootings occurring between September 1, 2023, and July 30, 2024.⁵ In Memphis, victims and suspects were largely between the ages of 18 and 35. The average age of homicide suspects and victims was 30.77, while the average age of nonfatal shooting suspects and victims was 29.43.

Black males accounted for the overwhelming majority of people involved in shooting incidents in Memphis. While Memphis does have a majority Black population, Black people overall, and Black men in particular, are highly overrepresented among victims and suspects of gun violence, highlighting the need for community-specific interventions. In Memphis, a history of incarceration is also a common factor among those involved in gun violence. Approximately 54.92% of individuals in homicide cases and 53.29% of those involved in nonfatal shootings—including both victims and suspects—had previously been incarcerated.

Group and gang involvement served as a leading indicator of increased likelihood for gun violence involvement: 75.79% of homicides involved at least one individual with suspected gang or group affiliations. This influence was even more pronounced in nonfatal shootings, where gang-involved individuals were present in 86.42% of incidents. These figures—which exclude cases with unknown group status—underscore the critical role that street groups play in fueling the city's cycles of violence.

The Memphis GVPA identified a number of pathways that lead to gun violence, including:

- ⊙ gangs, especially relatively new hybrid gangs;
- ⊙ social media, especially drill rap videos posted on social media that create or exacerbate group conflicts;
- ⊙ fighting over women;
- ⊙ feelings of impunity (the perceived lack of prosecution and accountability, especially among juveniles);
- ⊙ proliferation of firearms / easy access to guns, especially since a new state law allowing no-permit carry went into effect;
- ⊙ retaliatory cycles of gun violence;
- ⊙ poverty and lack of quality education; and
- ⊙ car break-ins where guns are stolen from vehicles and later used in shootings.

⁵ Memphis Gun Violence Problem Analysis Summary Report

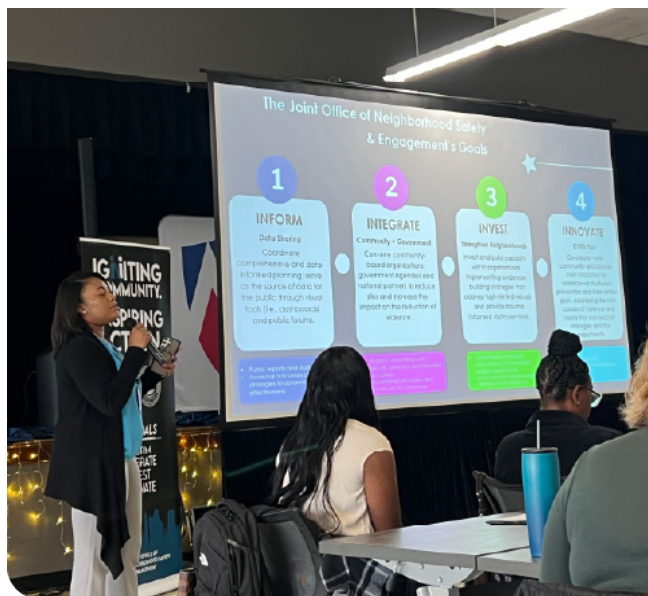
Memphis stakeholders engaged for the GVPA also emphasized that gun violence is connected to larger issues such as lack of housing, poverty, inadequate education, and personal conflicts. For example, people who are displaced/unhoused break into cars for shelter, and car break-ins often result in stolen guns that are later used in shooting incidents.

Although the analysis is focused on understanding the near-term drivers of gun violence, the report also pointed out the striking levels of poverty in Memphis. In 2023, the poverty rate in Memphis was 22.6%—well above the national average of 12.8% and the Tennessee average of 14.0%. Among Black Memphis residents, the poverty rate was 27.1%, and among Black children, the poverty rate was 43.0%. Poverty, substandard education, generational trauma, lack of resources, and neighborhood dysfunction are all significant root causes of violence.

Memphis and Shelby County’s Response to Gun Violence

Amid persistently high rates of gun violence, the City of Memphis and Shelby County (where the city is located) have engaged in a series of efforts to understand and address violence, many of which have been undertaken in partnership with NICJR. Since 2021, NICJR has partnered with the City of Memphis in developing a gun violence reduction strategy (GVRS), engaging community-based organizations (CBOs) in training and technical assistance, disbursing rapid response funds, and providing additional training and thought partnership.

With NICJR’s support, Shelby County and the City of Memphis established the Joint Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (JONSE) in November 2024. The Joint Office is intended to complement the existing local government structure, which includes a City Mayor and a County Mayor. As such, JONSE is led by a Director representing Shelby County and a Director representing the City of Memphis. The Joint Office provides room for the two mayoral administrations to work together and meet the needs of constituents in both the city and the broader county. JONSE works to inform, integrate, invest, and innovate by increasing data sharing and data-driven decision-making, fostering collaboration, expanding CBO capacity, and engaging in strategic planning. To this end, in the first few months of JONSE’s operation, NICJR’s National Offices of Violence Prevention Network (NOVPN) assisted the Joint Office by hosting multiple convenings to clarify roles and break down silos among community violence intervention (CVI) practitioners.



In 2024, NICJR also worked with JONSE to analyze the [local community violence intervention landscape](#).⁶ That analysis provided a set of local, culturally relevant definitions of the eleven types of critical CVI work; an overview of the existing CVI ecosystem; an analysis of its current strengths and challenges; and recommendations to inform the work of the Joint Office moving forward. NICJR found that the county had 14 core CVI organizations and agencies across eight areas of CVI work. This strong foundation was heavily supported by many additional organizations across the county engaging in similar or complementary work. However, despite existing partnerships, CVI work in Shelby County was also largely fragmented; when formal partnerships did not exist between two or more organizations, there was little communication or knowledge of what others offered. Further, while the ecosystem featured an array of service types, several important areas of CVI work were missing, and existing providers had a pressing need for additional training and technical assistance.

⁶ [Shelby County, TN, Landscape Analysis](#)

NICJR's recent work with Memphis and Shelby County has also included organizing cross-jurisdictional learning and support. In August and November 2025, the Memphis Mayor, Memphis Police Chief, and JONSE staff participated in site visits to learn about the City of Indianapolis Gun Violence Reduction Strategy, which was developed with NICJR support. The site visits included:

- ✔ extensive training on relentless pursuit and various methods to keep program participants engaged;
- ✔ a tour of the Indy Peace offices and a breakdown of Indy Peace programs;
- ✔ attendance at the Mayor's monthly Data-Driven Performance Management Meeting;
- ✔ attendance at Conflict Mapping Meetings;
- ✔ a tour of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Real-Time Crime Center;
- ✔ site visits to additional CBOs that partner with Indy Peace; and
- ✔ for a smaller subset of Memphis staff, attendance at both the Coordination Meeting and Community Safety Meeting.

With support from NICJR, the City of Memphis is now implementing a Gun Violence Reduction Strategy. NICJR provides coaching, training, and technical assistance and conducts frequent site visits to support Memphis's implementation of GVRs.

In Shelby County, NICJR's NOVPN team conducted an operational assessment of JONSE, which identified strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. NICJR staff also provided team coaching to JONSE to enhance staff effectiveness, collaboration, and leadership, and they helped the Joint Office navigate crisis management, immediate response, and coordinated recovery when gun violence occurs. Finally, to promote long-term stability, NICJR offered tools and planning frameworks that reinforce the sustainability of an office such as JONSE.

NICJR also has a longstanding working relationship with the local nonprofit Youth Villages. From Life Coaching and Intensive Case Management training to foundational training on the inner workings of a functioning gun violence reduction strategy, NICJR's support has helped Youth Villages create Memphis Allies, which has become a leading community violence intervention organization in the city. In addition to employing nearly 200 CVI workers, Memphis Allies has provided funding and capacity-building support to smaller CBOs.

The Tennessee Governor proposed an \$80 million grant to the City of Memphis in his Fiscal Year 26–27 budget to combat crime and violence. Fifty million was slated for public safety measures in downtown Memphis, namely enforcement, and \$15 million each was budgeted for employment services and for GVRs. Only the \$50 million for downtown was passed by the legislature, leaving no funding for GVRs. Memphis will have to find funding to expand and maintain adequate CVI programming. In a city where the Police Department budget was more than \$300 million in 2025 (though it will likely be down to \$225 million in 2027),⁷ CVI should receive no less than \$20 million in funding.

⁷ The price of protection—Chief Davis proposes \$307 million budget, pay raises to city council

Knoxville

Gun Violence Trends in Knoxville



NICJR has partnered with the City of Knoxville since 2023. NICJR conducted a Gun Violence Problem Analysis in Knoxville, reviewing 82 homicides and 167 nonfatal shootings that took place between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2024.⁸ In Knoxville, victims and suspects were largely between the ages of 18 and 35. The average age of homicide suspects and victims was 35.65, while the average age of nonfatal shooting suspects and victims was 28.8.

Black males accounted for the overwhelming majority of people involved in shooting incidents in Knoxville. In Knoxville, Black residents make up only 15.79% of the population, yet as with Memphis, Black people overall, and Black men in particular, are highly overrepresented among victims and suspects of gun violence—highlighting the need for targeted, community-specific interventions in both places.

The Knoxville GVPA found that shooting suspects and victims often had criminal histories, with 58.17% of individuals involved in homicides and 56.86% of individuals involved in nonfatal shootings having at least one prior arrest. In comparison, 31.37% of individuals involved in homicides and 28.86% of individuals involved in nonfatal shootings had been previously incarcerated.

Gang or group involvement also plays a central role in Knoxville violent crime: 61.4% of homicides and 56.9% of nonfatal shootings involved at least one individual suspected of gang affiliation. These figures exclude cases where investigators were unable to determine the group status of the victims or suspects.⁹

The Knoxville GVPA also presented several factors that contribute to violence within the jurisdiction:

- ⊙ gang-related conflict;
- ⊙ social media-inflamed conflicts, such as rap beefs;
- ⊙ robberies involving drugs and money related to drugs;
- ⊙ violence around selling and trafficking guns, including Glock switches; and
- ⊙ public housing redevelopment efforts, which have moved residents (including gang-involved individuals) to new neighborhoods, sometimes into rival territory.

Focus groups in Knoxville emphasized that gun violence is connected to larger issues such as lack of housing, poverty, inadequate education, and personal conflicts.

⁸ In Knoxville, all homicide incidents were included in the analysis, while in Memphis, only homicides involving a firearm were analyzed.

⁹ Given the significant difference between the number of shooting incidents in Memphis and Knoxville, a smaller proportion of Knoxville incidents were excluded from analysis due to officers being unable to determine gang involvement.

Knoxville's Response to Gun Violence

Like Memphis, Knoxville has taken a number of key steps to understand and address gun violence over the last several years. In 2021, Knoxville established the Office of Community Safety and Empowerment (OCSE) to lead violence interruption strategies; foster safety, innovation, and collaboration across City departments; and strengthen partnerships with individuals and organizations dedicated to enhancing Knoxville's safety. The Office maintains bi-weekly meetings with the Mayor and Chief of Police, as well as regularly scheduled sessions with the full cabinet. OCSE also collaborates closely with the City's Community Empowerment Department and coordinates resources for frontline workers committed to ensuring neighborhood safety. Additionally, OCSE provides several mini-grants for organizations working to interrupt violence. In the past few years, Knoxville has also invested in a range of other efforts to reduce violence, including spring and summer camps that provide safe spaces for youth, a youth violence prevention week, and a variety of community events and channels for community engagement.

In 2023, the City of Knoxville, led by OCSE and the Knoxville Police Department (KPD), began working with NICJR to bolster the City's response to violence. With support and guidance from NICJR, Knoxville has assessed its needs, developed and pivoted programming to meet those needs, and equipped OCSE to support the organizations within its CVI ecosystem. NICJR has provided focused support to the OCSE Director and Knoxville Peace (KP) team and has supported the City in establishing Shooting Reviews and strengthening coordination between government agencies and community-based service providers.

NICJR also conducted a [Cost of Gun Violence analysis in Knoxville](#), detailing the total cost of violence to local taxpayers.¹⁰ To document these costs, NICJR worked with the local government to understand personnel engaged and expenditures incurred in responding to fatal and nonfatal shootings, including crime-scene response, medical care, and the criminal justice process. NICJR also analyzed the costs of social service benefits and lost tax revenues. In total, each homicide costs Knoxville taxpayers \$1,400,000, and each nonfatal shooting costs more than \$600,000. It is important to note that these are conservative costs, and the full cost is likely even greater.

A [Knoxville Landscape Analysis](#) was also conducted by NICJR.¹¹ Through this analysis, NICJR identified the need for development, expansion, and support within the local CVI ecosystem. At the time of research, just three organizations comprised Knoxville's CVI ecosystem. While their efforts were commendable, the analysis identified notable gaps in their understanding of CVI principles and practices and a clear need for training and technical assistance to strengthen their work.

This research has been critical to the launch of Knoxville Peace, a CVI initiative developed in partnership with the Knoxville Mayor's Office, Office of Community Safety and Empowerment, Knoxville community, and NICJR. The program provides focused support to individuals at the highest risk of being involved in gun violence. NICJR now directly operates the Knoxville Peace program and provides intensive training and support for the KP team. NICJR is working with OCSE, the Mayor, and the community to transition Knoxville Peace to a local provider.

Knoxville's investments in and commitment to this work have allowed NICJR to provide the City and its CVI ecosystem with the knowledge and tools needed to reduce gun violence. Since the beginning of NICJR's partnership with Knoxville, homicides have declined. Knoxville recorded 33 homicides in 2022. That number fell to 24 in 2023—for a 27% decrease—and declined again to 22 in 2024. In 2025, Knoxville experienced a historic low of 16 homicides. Overall, homicides have decreased by approximately 30% since the beginning of NICJR's partnership with the City of Knoxville.¹²

¹⁰ [Knoxville, TN, Cost of Gun Violence Report](#)

¹¹ [Knoxville Landscape Analysis](#)

¹² [Knoxville Police Department Year-End Summary: 2025](#)

Chattanooga

Chattanooga Gun Violence Trends

Like most cities across the country, Chattanooga experienced a spike in gun violence with the onset of COVID-19. From 2019 to 2020, criminal nonfatal shootings increased by 39% (from 80 to 111), while incidents involving group or gang members rose by 36% (from 22 to 30).^{13,14} Chattanooga then experienced a unique shift in 2021, with both a decrease in homicides (n=27) and an increase in nonfatal shootings (n=119).¹⁵ From 2023 to 2024, the city saw a further 7% decrease in homicides, from 29 total homicides to 27.¹⁶ During the same period, Chattanooga experienced a 20% decrease in nonfatal shootings,¹⁷ from 85 incidents with 105 victims in 2023 to 68 incidents with 83 victims in 2024. In 2025, Chattanooga experienced record lows, with 17 homicides and 40 nonfatal shootings.¹⁸

Chattanooga's Response To Gun Violence

The City of Chattanooga created an Office of Community Safety and Gun Violence Prevention focused on coordinating efforts to reduce violence through data-driven strategies and community partnerships. A primary goal of the office is to have rigorous, reliable data that allows the City to identify root causes, track trends, and allocate resources effectively. As that information is made accessible, it will equip violence intervention and prevention initiatives and organizations to address issues before they escalate, leading to safer communities for all residents.

Through the Office of Community Safety and Gun Violence Prevention, City officials are working with young Chattanoogaans who have been directly impacted by gun violence to gain insight into their experiences and perspectives. These engagements inform the development and implementation of evidence-based strategies aimed at reducing youth gun violence and improving the overall quality of life in Chattanooga.

The City has also invested in programs such as 423 Chain Breakers, a grassroots coalition made up largely of formerly incarcerated individuals, faith leaders, and concerned community members who work together to address gun violence and street crime at its roots. The mission of 423 Chain Breakers is to interrupt cycles of violence; empower and support youth and young adults; and help rebuild stronger, safer communities. The coalition provides relocation support and immediate assistance with food, clothing, education, and employment.

Additionally, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga developed the Chattanooga United to Reduce Violence (CURV) initiative. CURV specifically seeks to reduce gun violence in vulnerable neighborhoods through data-driven, community-based interventions, including expanded youth programming, trauma-informed care, family supports, and violence interruption.¹⁹ This work is led by Professor Ricki Dierenfeldt, who also collaborated with the Chattanooga Police Department to launch and evaluate the Scenic City Crime Gun Intelligence

13 [Chattanooga Police Department Departmental Update 2019/2020](#)

14 [Chattanooga Police Department Departmental Update 2020/2021](#)

15 [Gun Violence Archive](#)

16 [City of Chattanooga Monthly Crime Breakdown, December 2024](#)

17 *Ibid.*

18 [Gun Violence Archive data request](#)

19 [UTC announces launch of the Violence Reduction Initiative](#)

Center (CGIC), through which several statistical analyses, policy-oriented reports, and performance metrics were developed to guide strategies for reducing gun violence. The partnership achieved significant results between the years of 2019 and 2022, including a 27% reduction in firearm homicides, a 36% decrease in total homicides, and a 42% decrease in shooting victims.²⁰ Building on this success, Dierenfeldt proposed creating CURV to strengthen the city's ability to address violence through data-driven research.

The City's violence reduction efforts were also supported by Trajectory Changing Solutions (TCS), a consulting firm founded by Norman Livingston, a former contractor and partner of NICJR. TCS specializes in violence prevention strategies, leadership development, and organizational coaching. The Chattanooga City Council initially contracted the firm through a one-year, \$250,000 contract.²¹ In partnership with the Chattanooga Police Department, TCS worked to identify what strategies had been successful and where gaps remained. This included reviewing recent crime trends and other data to identify the highest-risk individuals driving gun violence and connect them to targeted, supportive services with the aim of reducing community violence.

Nashville

Nashville Gun Violence Trends

Nashville experienced a 25.3% increase in gun violence from 2019 to 2020, with 104 fatal shootings, and averaged 83 homicides between 2021–2024. Like the other cities in this report, Nashville experienced record-breaking declines in violence in 2025, with homicides decreasing by 51% and nonfatal shootings falling by 42%. Despite this overall progress, data show a heavy racial disparity in who is being impacted by gun violence, with a persistent and disproportionate impact on Nashville's Black community.

Although 24.9% of Nashville's population is Black, in 2024, Black residents accounted for 64.44% of homicide victims and 70.17% of nonfatal shooting victims. White residents, who make up 54.6% of the city's population, represented 32.22% homicide victims and 29.56% nonfatal shooting victims that year. Even as the total number of incidents fell in 2025, Black victims still made up approximately 66% of fatal shootings and 70% of nonfatal shootings. While citywide safety is improving, the burden of violence still falls disproportionately on Nashville's Black community, and there remains a major need for targeted resources in specific neighborhoods.

Nashville's Response to Gun Violence

Freddie O'Connell, Mayor of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, issued Executive Order 53 in November 2024, creating the city's first Office of Youth Safety (OYS).²² With a prevention-focused approach, the office aims to support Nashville youth before they come into contact with the criminal justice system. The office has piloted and evaluated programs that prevent gun violence and develop youth conflict resolution skills and relies on data and research to guide investments in youth violence prevention and restorative justice programs, prioritizing at-risk youth.

²⁰ [UTC professor, students helping Chattanooga Police decrease gun crimes](#)

²¹ [Chattanooga hires consultant for \\$250,000 to help with violence intervention strategy](#)

²² [Mayor Freddie O'Connell Executive Order Number 053](#)

OYS supports evidence-based, community-informed anti-violence initiatives across City and County departments to promote youth safety and well-being. This includes examining how City and County departments can continue to build safer communities for youth while minimizing harmful interactions with the criminal justice system. The office has also strengthened relationships with leaders of existing restorative justice initiatives within City departments, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and other community partners. Additionally, OYS developed its own restorative justice program.

Nashville has a local chapter of the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative. MBK was created by President Barack Obama in 2014 after the death of Trayvon Martin and in response to the need for greater support for Black boys across the country. Launched in Nashville in 2020, the organization focuses on three key priorities: ensuring that students are reading at grade level by third grade, supporting students to graduate from high school prepared for college and career success, and reducing violence while providing second-chance opportunities.²³ MBK is committed to providing access to mentorship and positive, culturally relevant community-building activities. Through community collaboration, MBK Nashville creates public spaces where Black men and other men of color can connect, fostering brotherhood, manhood, and alliance.

Another notable organization is Nashville Peacemakers, which was founded in 2003 after a resident lost her only son to a gang-related shooting.²⁴ Nashville Peacemakers is a nonprofit dedicated to breaking the cycle of violence in the local community. The organization is working to build safer and more resilient communities by offering counseling, mentorship, shelter, and intervention programs. Nashville Peacemakers has three core programs. Back to Basics is a six-week program that engages girls aged 12–17 in learning about basic life and coping skills and provides support as they navigate difficult life experiences. Straight Talk was created for boys aged 12–18 who are at risk of gang involvement and being victims of violence. Through six weekly sessions, participants learn what it takes to be a man, a father, and a success in life. Lastly, Mothers Over Murder is a support group for mothers healing from the loss of their children through violence.

Another key resource in Nashville is the Oasis Center, which is a national organization committed to helping youth transition into healthy and productive adulthood.²⁵ The Oasis Center partners with the Davidson County Juvenile Court on the Reaching Excellence As Leaders program, which provides opportunities for young people to engage in leadership and life skills development as an alternative to detention. Through this eight-week experience, youth receive mentorship and services that help them navigate their identity and build skills to manage high levels of stress and trauma. Youth engage in conflict resolution training, educational support, mental health services, and leadership development. Families are also engaged through fun activities, weekend retreats, and other relationship-building events.

You Have the Power (YHTP) is an organization that empowers victims of violent crime through information, prevention, education, and advocacy.²⁶ YHTP works to raise awareness of crime and justice issues through victim advocacy, community information programs, and distributing brochures and documentaries throughout Tennessee.

Lastly, the Tennessee Department of Children and other agencies are partnering to offer the Youth Impact Curriculum in the Davidson County Juvenile Court, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Office of the District Attorney for the 20th Judicial District of Tennessee, Sexual Assault Center, and Oasis Center. This eight-week curriculum features cognitive-behavioral therapy workshops for at-risk youth aged 14–24, with a focus on preventing risky behavior and serious offenses. It is inspired by the Victim Impact Curriculum, which helps formerly incarcerated individuals and those nearing parole reflect on the impact of their actions, understand the factors that led to their decisions, and make better choices for the future.

²³ [My Brother's Keeper Nashville Playbook](#)

²⁴ [Nashville Peacemakers: Our Story](#)

²⁵ [Reaching Excellence As Leaders](#)

²⁶ [You Have The Power](#)

Conclusion

Jurisdictions that collaborate to develop sustainable CVI ecosystems and commit to data-driven solutions are not only invested in reducing gun violence in the near term but are also dedicated to long-term solutions. In Tennessee, these investments in gun violence reduction can have, at minimum, cost savings of \$1,400,000 per homicide and roughly \$600,000 per nonfatal shooting.²⁷

Overall, Tennessee's major cities have acknowledged the need for effective gun violence prevention and intervention through their efforts and investments. As cities across the state continue to strategize to reduce gun violence and create safer cities, they must continue to invest in what works. NICJR's work in these jurisdictions offers insights that can inform nascent gun violence reduction efforts elsewhere in the state.

There are numerous pathways to increased public safety. However, significant, sustainable reductions in gun violence require a comprehensive plan that engages government partners; community-based organizations that can build trust with those at the highest risk of involvement in gun violence; and higher education institutions that can support research, data transparency, and data literacy. Collaborative efforts and strategies built upon partnerships, community input, trust, and buy-in are imperative to ensure continued violence reductions across Tennessee.

Finally, substantial and ongoing funding for comprehensive CVI strategies is imperative to continue the impressive reductions in gun violence that Tennessee has achieved.



²⁷ Based on the [Knoxville Cost of Gun Violence Report](#).

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