

Indianapolis, Indiana **GUN VIOLENCE PROBLEM ANALYSIS**

Summary Report | March 2018 – February 2020

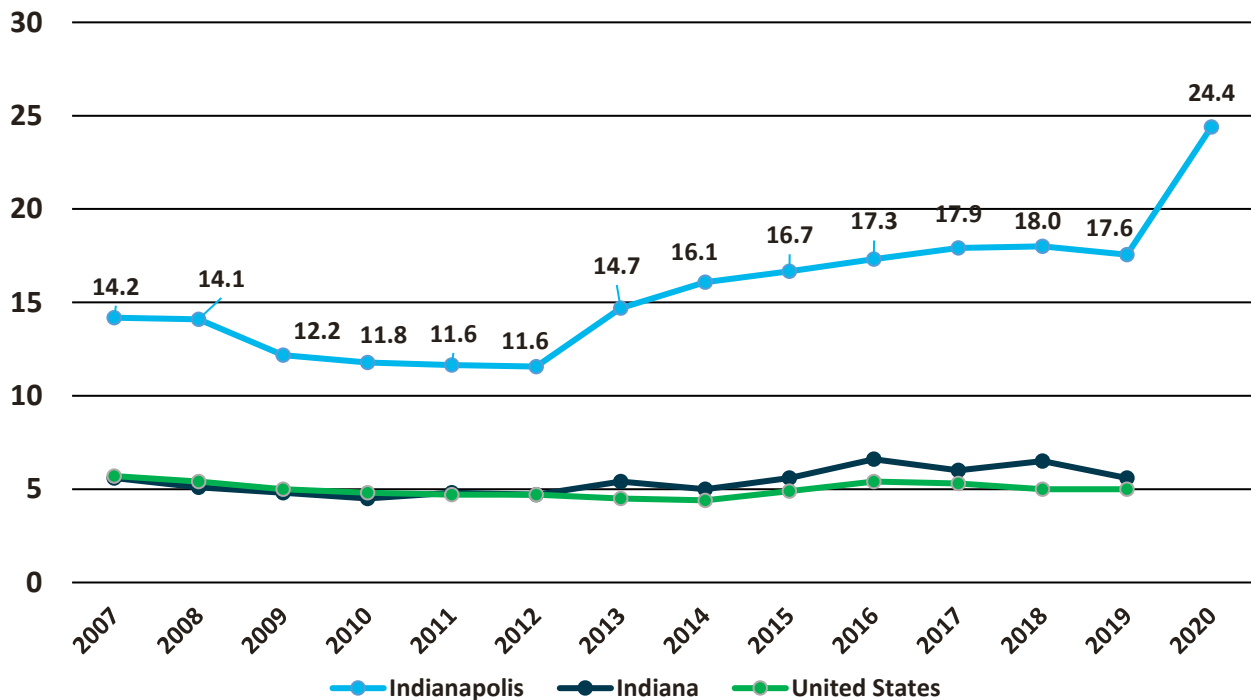


Indianapolis Gun Violence Problem Analysis Summary Report

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

This analysis is of special local importance because the homicide rate in Indianapolis has remained about three times higher than both the national and statewide rates since 2014 (Table 1). For example, the average homicide rate in Indianapolis from 2010-2019 was 15.3 per 100,000 population. Comparatively, the average national homicide rate during the same period was 4.9 per 100,000 population. Both homicides and nonfatal shootings have continued to rise gradually since 2014 with a significant spike in 2020 as Indianapolis and other U.S. cities experienced increased violence. The homicide rate in Indianapolis in 2020 was 39 percent higher than the 2019 rate and reflected the highest number of homicides on record in the city’s history.

Table 1. Indianapolis Homicide Rate 2007-2020



This Gun Violence Problem Analysis examines all 296 homicides occurring in Indianapolis from March 1, 2018 – February 29, 2020, and all 456 nonfatal injury shootings that occurred from March 1, 2019 – February 29, 2020. Officer-involved shootings, accidental self-inflictions, and

cases of justified self-defense were excluded from our sample. The goal of this analysis is to examine the circumstances of the event itself, explore the characteristics of individuals involved, and identify the networks associated with the highest risk of violence. This work establishes a common understanding of the local violence problem that can help guide policy, tailor interventions to those at the highest risk of violence, and inform the work of civic, community, and criminal justice leaders to reduce gun violence in Indianapolis.

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

- **Homicide:** In this report, the term “homicide” refers to criminal homicides in which a killing was intentional or due to criminal negligence (i.e., murder or manslaughter).
- **Nonfatal Shooting:** In this report, “nonfatal shooting” refers to shooting incidents involving criminal intent in which a victim was struck by a bullet discharged from a firearm.
- **Community Supervision:** This term refers to the supervision of a convicted offender in the local community rather than in physical custody within a jail or prison. This may refer to community corrections, probation, or parole.
- **Group:** We use the terms group to refer to the wide range of dynamics and structures present in criminally active street groups. Individuals at high risk for violence are likely to associate within particular groups and social networks, ranging from more highly organized, formal gangs to more loosely associated, informal neighborhood crews. Labels aside, attention to groups is important because criminally active groups, gangs, crews, and social networks tend to drive a substantial amount of violence.
- **Suspect:** For the purposes of this report, “suspect” refers to people arrested for a shooting or homicide. In some instances, it also includes people investigators are certain were the perpetrators but they were not able to effect an arrest due to uncooperative witnesses or other technical challenges.

Victims and Suspects of Homicides and Shootings

Demographics

The victims and suspects of homicides and shootings in Indianapolis are primarily male, Black, and between the ages of 18-34. Nearly 85 percent of victims and suspects in both homicides and shootings were male. About 77 percent of victims and suspects in both homicides and shootings were Black, despite Black citizens comprising only 29 percent of the overall population in Indianapolis (Table 2). About 62 percent of homicide victims/suspects and 60 percent of shooting victim/suspects were between the ages of 18-34, with a mean age of 30.9 and 29.5, respectively.

Across homicides and shootings, both victims and suspects are demographically similar overall. Victims are slightly more likely to be White when compared to suspects, but both groups are still overwhelmingly Black.

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

	HOMICIDES (N=296)			SHOOTINGS (N=456)			INDIANAPOLIS POPULATION
	Victims (n=314)	Suspects (n=237)*	Victims & Suspects (n=551)	Victims (n=523)	Suspects (n=144)*	Victims & Suspects (n=667)	
Sex							
Male	81.5%	89.5%	84.9%	82.8%	86.8%	83.7%	48.2%
Female	18.5%	10.6%	15.1%	17.2%	13.2%	16.3%	51.8%
Race							
White	19.1%	12.5%	16.3%	23.9%	15.1%	22.1%	60.9%
Black	73.9%	82.8%	77.7%	75.3%	83.5%	77.0%	28.6%
Hispanic	5.7%	3.9%	5.0%	-	0.7%	0.2%	10.5%
Asian	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.4%	0.7%	0.5%	3.4%
Other	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%	-	0.3%	

*5 homicide suspects and 5 shooting suspects missing race.

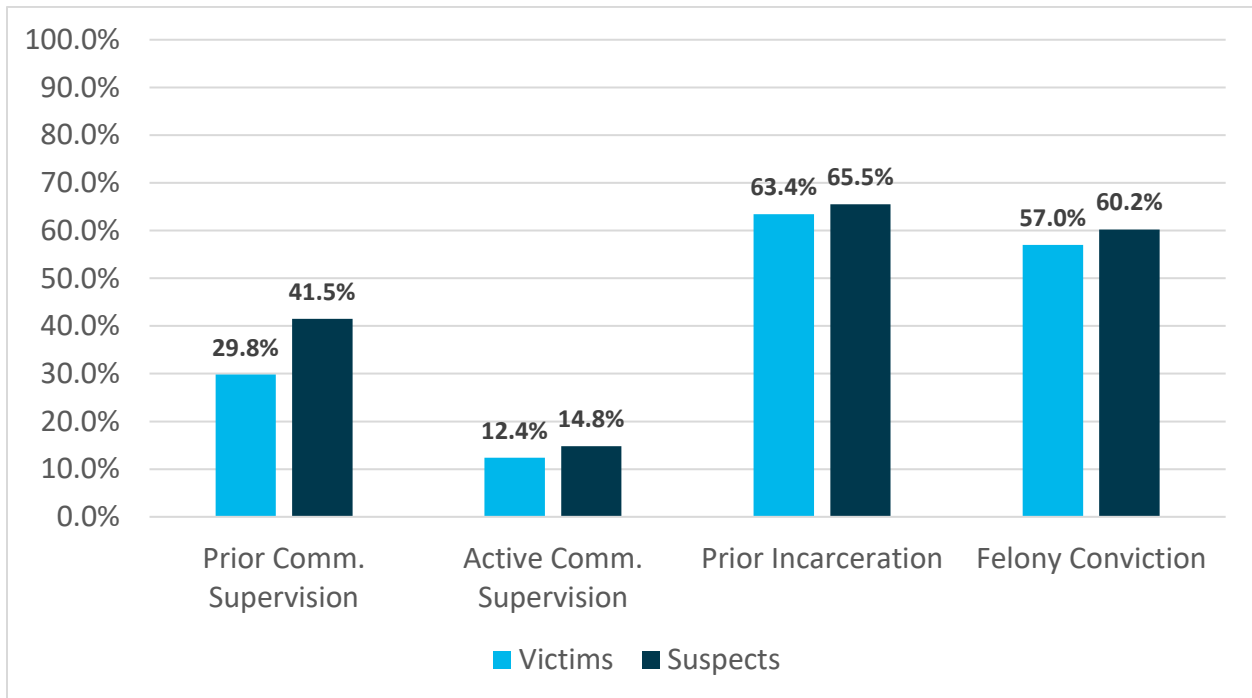
Criminal Justice System Involvement

About 74 percent of homicide victims and suspects were known to the criminal justice system prior to the incident.¹ Of those who were known to the criminal justice system, about 64 percent had been previously incarcerated and about 58 percent were convicted felons (Table 3). About 12 percent of victims and 15 percent of suspects were on active community supervision at the time of the incident, and about 7 percent were on electronic GPS monitoring. Approximately 44 percent were either on active community supervision or had been on prior community supervision at some point in their lives. Victims and suspects were most often supervised by Marion County Community Corrections (6.4 percent active and 24.6 percent prior) or Marion County Probation (9.4 percent active and 16.3 percent prior).²

¹ We were not able to obtain criminal history reports for shooting victims and suspects. Therefore, the percentage of shooting victims/suspects that have previous arrests or previous supervision status is unknown.

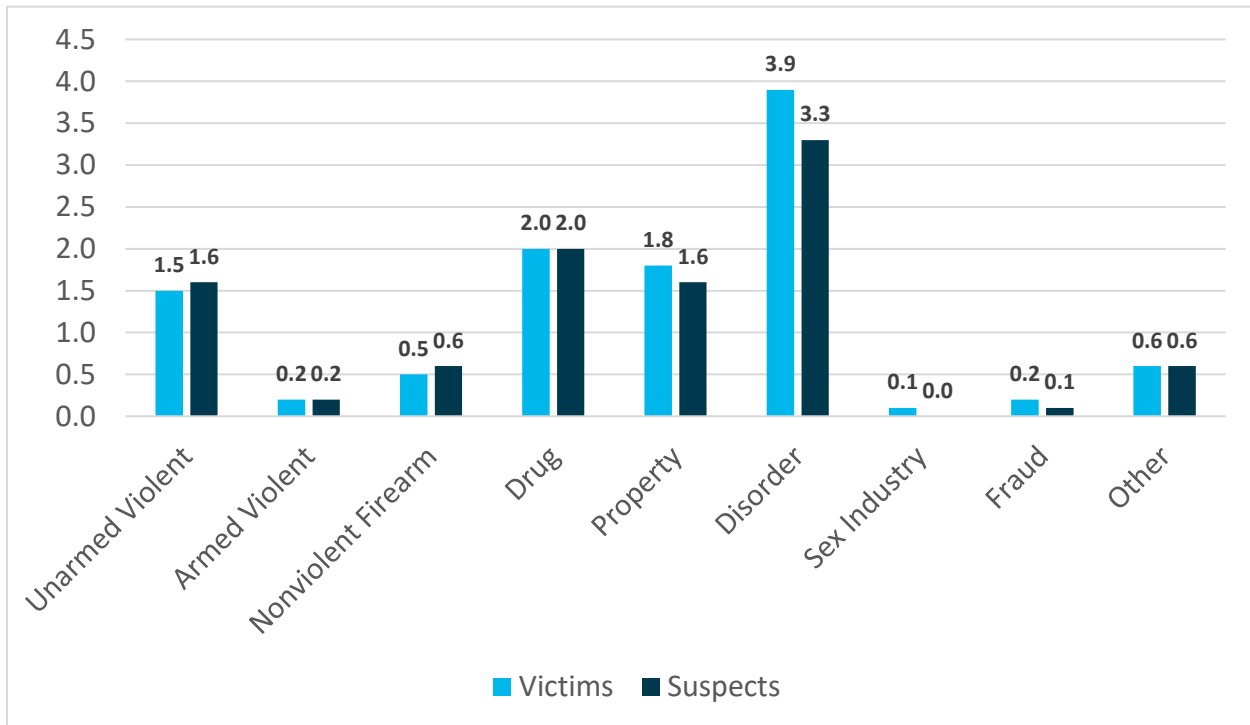
² Victim and suspect supervision statuses are estimates and may be unreliable given differential data collection and reporting system among the participating agencies. Marion County Community Corrections could only provide supervision information back to 2017. As a result, this data may undercount those who have ever been on prior community supervision. Finally, with the exception of federal probation, this data primarily reflects local supervision status (e.g., Marion County, State of Indiana). However, most homicide victim and suspect criminal

Table 3. Victims and Suspects of Homicides: Criminal Justice System Involvement



history records (89.8%) were collected from Interstate Identification Index (III) data, which includes offenses and convictions outside of Marion County and Indianapolis.

Table 4. Victims and Suspects of Homicides: Prior Offenses



Victims and suspects were remarkably similar in terms of the average number and type of prior criminal offenses. Of those who were known to the criminal justice system prior to the homicide, most victims and suspects had been arrested for disorder (avg. 3.7), drug (avg. 2.0), and unarmed violent (avg. 1.5) offenses (Table 4). Overall, most victims and suspects had been arrested about 8 times for 11 different offenses by the time of the homicide.

Repeat Involvement

Of the 1,192 unique victims and suspects across both homicides and shootings, 29 individuals (2.4 percent) appear more than once as victims, suspects, or both. All 29 individuals were Black males. Repeatedly involved individuals were younger than the average age across the cohort studied. Repeatedly involved individuals were an average age of 23.6 and 62.1 percent of them were between the ages of 18-24. About 65 percent were known to be group-involved. 34.5 percent (n=10) of these individuals were present in the dataset as both shooting victims and homicide suspects, suggesting their involvement in cycles of retaliatory violence. Nearly thirty percent of this population (27.6% (n=8)) were repeat suspects in both homicides and shootings.

Incident Analysis

All Homicides

This section analyzes the circumstances of homicide events from March 2018 – February 2020 (N=296). About 39 percent of homicides were confirmed to involve group members as victims, suspects, or both, and in another 38 percent of homicides, the group involvement of victims and/or suspects was unknown. Therefore, at least 39 percent and potentially up to 77 percent of homicides involved group members as victims, suspects, or both, though the exact percentage is unknown.

This analysis collected homicide circumstance information from case summaries and detective interviews. Homicides most often occurred as a result of personal disputes between known individuals (25.7 percent). When homicides involved group members as victims and/or suspects, the most common motives were personal disputes (27.0 percent) and instant confrontations (12.2 percent). Group members were also involved in a significant share of other crimes that result in homicides like robberies, drug robberies, and other types of drug-related disputes.

Gun Homicides

Of the 296 homicides occurring from March 2018-February 2020, 81 percent (n=234) were gun homicides. Gun homicides may be characteristically different from homicides occurring by other means, so we analyze the subset of gun homicides separately to explore any differences.

At the individual-level, the victims and suspects of homicides look very similar to the victims and suspects of homicides overall. They are primarily male (88.6 percent) and Black (83.6 percent). The average age of victims and suspects is 29.4, and most (67.5 percent) are between the ages of 18-34.

About 75 percent of victims and suspects were known to the criminal justice system prior to the homicide. Of those who were known to the criminal justice system, about 19 percent of victims and suspects were on active community supervision at the time. Approximately 44 percent were either on active community supervision or had been on prior community supervision at some point in their lives.

About 44 percent of gun homicides were confirmed to involve group members as victims, suspects, or both, and in another 37 percent of incidents, the group involvement of victims and/or suspects was unknown. Therefore, between 44-81 percent of gun homicides involved group members as victims, suspects, or both, though the exact percentage is unknown. Gun homicides most often occurred as a result of personal disputes between known individuals (26.1 percent). When homicides involved group members as victims and/or suspects, the most common motives were personal disputes (29.1 percent) and robberies (11.7 percent) (Table 5).

Table 5. Gun Homicide Circumstances and Group Involvement

	Total		Group-Involved		Not Group-Involved	
	(n=234)		(n=103)		(n=45)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Personal dispute	61	26.1%	30	29.1%	11	24.4%
Drug-related dispute	28	12.0%	8	7.8%	3	6.7%
Robbery	26	11.1%	12	11.7%	6	13.3%
Instant dispute	23	9.8%	11	10.7%	2	4.4%
Domestic violence	16	6.8%	4	3.9%	9	20.0%
Drug robbery	21	9.0%	9	8.7%	7	15.6%
Retaliation/Revenge	13	5.5%	7	6.8%	4	8.9%
Other	8	3.4%	4	3.9%	3	6.7%
Ongoing group conflict	8	3.4%	8	7.8%	-	-
Internal group conflict	3	1.3%	3	2.9%	-	-
Unknown	27	11.5%	7	6.8%	-	-

Nonfatal Shootings

This section analyzes the circumstances of nonfatal shooting events from March 2019 – February 2020 (N=456). Between 39-86 percent of shootings involved group members as victims, suspects, or both, though the exact percentage is unknown.

This analysis collected shooting circumstance information from case summaries and data provided by detectives. Shootings most often occurred as a result of personal disputes between known individuals (21.5 percent). When shootings involved group members as victims and/or suspects, the most common motives were personal disputes (19.1 percent) and drug-related disputes (12.4 percent). Group members were also involved in a significant share of other crimes that result in violence like robberies.

High-Risk Groups and Networks

Case investigators and CGIC analysts provided group association information for all victims and suspects where possible. However, data and intelligence challenges did exist. Even in incidents where investigators or CGIC analysts identified victims or suspects as being involved in a group, they were not able to identify specific group associations for 41 percent of homicide victims and 37 percent of homicide suspects. Specific group associations were unknown for 63 percent of shooting victims and 64 percent of shooting suspects who were identified as group-involved.

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

Still, a large proportion of victims and suspects involved in violence were noted to be group-involved. In homicide events, between 23-41 percent of victims and 38-59 percent of identified suspects were group-involved. In nonfatal shooting events, at least 31 percent of victims and 39 percent of identified suspects were group-involved.³

At least 63 groups were identified among the victims and/or suspects of homicides and shootings that took place from 2018-2020. Of those, 17 groups were involved in two or more shootings/homicides. Across homicides and shootings, five core groups emerged as responsible for the most violent incidents.

Notably, most of these groups or cliques are not the traditional, hierarchical, and structured “gangs” with stable territories and colors that used to be more prevalent in Indianapolis. Instead, groups and their turfs were noted to be unstable and dynamic, with associated members frequently crossing city districts and sometimes holding very fluid associations with multiple groups. Most groups are active in the East, North, and Northwest Districts.

Summary Findings and Recommendations

The victims and suspects of homicides and nonfatal shootings have very similar characteristics and risk factors. They are overwhelmingly young Black men aged 18-34. Most have a significant criminal justice history, and the majority of those known to the criminal justice system prior to the review period have been previously incarcerated and have committed more than seven prior offenses. When individuals are involved in multiple violent incidents they are likely to be connected to a group and with a victim or suspect in a recent shooting. These findings generate four core recommendations:

1. Improve intelligence gathering related to local groups, gangs, and crews.

- a. As illustrated in this report, a large amount of gun violence in Indianapolis includes group members yet there were a large number of cases where specific information about victim’s or suspect group’s associations was unknown.

2. Enhance information sharing across units.

- a. The IMPD has several units doing very impressive work, but it appears as if some of these units work in silos and information sharing across the Department could be greatly improved.

³ “Unknown” designations were not provided for shooting victims and suspects.

- b. The Homicide Investigations Unit, the Aggravated Assault Investigations Unit, CGIC, the district Flex Teams, IVRP, and the Incident Analysis Center should all improve their coordination and information sharing.
- 3. Bolster existing Shooting Review meetings.**
 - a. The IMPD recently started a weekly “Shooting Review” meeting to identify recent shootings that have a likelihood for retaliation and to share information with the Office of Public Health and Safety.
 - b. The Shooting Review process should continue to improve with the goal of accurately identifying groups and individuals at highest risk of gun violence so that focused intervention efforts can be directed towards these individuals. The Shooting Review process should include a systematic approach to collecting critical information about very high-risk networks.
- 4. Work with community and criminal justice partners to tailor interventions to those at the highest risk of violence.**
 - a. Using this analysis as a guide, utilize enhancements to information and intelligence gathering processes to identify and tailor enforcement and/or outreach opportunities to those at the very highest risk for victimization or perpetration of violence.