

MEMPHIS GUN VIOLENCE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY REPORT

National Institute for
Criminal Justice Reform

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This analysis is particularly important because Memphis has a history of one of the highest homicide rates in the United States.¹ In 2020, Memphis tallied an all-time record number of homicides, with the city on pace to surpass that grim milestone in 2021. For example, the average homicide rate in Memphis from 2010-2020 was 25.3 per 100,000. The homicide rate in Memphis in 2020 was 50.9 per 100,000 and reflected the highest number of homicides on record in the city's history. When examining 2010's homicide rate compared with 2020's homicide rate, there is a staggering 286 percent increase. Even when comparing 2019's homicide rate with 2020, there was a large increase of 74.3 percent.

Both homicides and nonfatal shootings have continued to rise gradually, with a significant spike in 2020 and 2021, as Memphis and other U.S. cities experienced

increased violence. During the period of January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021, the City has experienced 115 homicides and 175 non-fatal shootings.

Victims and suspects are also largely disproportionately Black and male. And despite common opinion, those primarily involved in homicides in Memphis are not teenagers, but young adults in their mid-to-late twenties.

Although children account for less than 10 percent of victims and suspects in homicides, they understandably receive much more media attention, causing many people to assume they are a larger portion of the problem.

More detailed studies conducted in other jurisdictions, along with media reports in Memphis, reveal that those arrested for and victimized by gun violence are often well known to the criminal justice system.

¹<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/forum-communities/memphis/brief>

Findings

Demographics

The victims and suspects of homicides and shootings in Memphis are primarily male, Black, and between the ages of 18-34. 74.6 percent of victims and 87.8 percent of suspects in homicides were male. Over 90 percent of victims and suspects in homicides were Black, while Black citizens comprise 64.1 percent of the overall population in Memphis. For homicides, the average age of victims was 26.8 years, and the average age of suspects was 28.1 years. For non-fatal shootings, the average age of victims was 17.9 years, and the average age of suspects was 24.9 years. The disparity in average ages for non-fatal shootings when compared with average ages for homicides is mainly due to a large portion of data missing/ not publicly available for non-fatal shootings. Across homicides and shootings, both victims and suspects are demographically similar overall. Victims are slightly more likely to be female when compared to suspects, but both groups are still overwhelmingly male.

Table 1: Average Age for Victims and Suspects

- Likely much higher given that we only know 18+ for many of the victims and suspects*.

Total Homicides	Average Age of Victim	Average Age of Suspect
115	26.8 years	28.1 years
	Ages known of 56 Victims	Ages known of 37 Suspects

*The source information on several incidents only included the victim and suspect age as '18+'.

Table 2: Adjusted Average Age for Victims and Suspects

- Any victims/ suspects labeled '18+' were factored into average age as 21 years of age*.

Total Homicides	Average Age of Victim	Average Age of Suspect
115	23.8 years	27.4 years
	115 Victims Included	49 Suspects Included

Table 3: % Gender by Victim of the 63 homicides where gender is known.

% Gender by Victim	Count	Percent of Adjusted Total Count
Male	47	74.6%
Female	16	25.4%
Total	63	100.0%

Table 4: % Gender by Suspect of the 41 homicides where gender is known.

% Gender by Victim	Count	Percent of Adjusted Total Count
Male	36	87.8%
Female	5	12.2%
Total	41	100.0%

*The source information on several incidents only included the victim and suspect age as '18+'.



Table 5: % Race by Victim of the 51 homicides where race is known.

% Race/ Ethnicity by Known Victim	Count	Percent of Total Count
Black	49	96.1%
White	2	3.9%
Total	51	100.0%

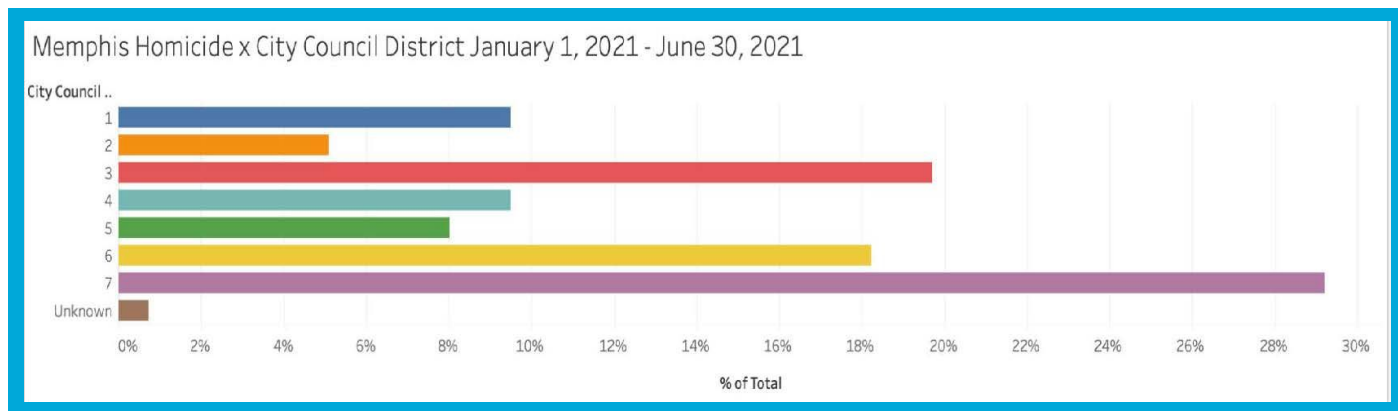
Table 6: % Race by Suspect of the 42 homicides where race is known.

% Race/ Ethnicity by Known Suspect	Count	Percent of Total Count
Black	39	92.9%
White	3	7.1%
Total	42	100.0%

Table 7: Total Homicides by Zip Code and City Council District

Council District	Zip Code	# of Homicides	Percent of Total
6	38103	2	1.7%
6	38104	1	0.9%
6	38106	8	7.0%
7	38107	6	5.2%
7	38108	12	10.4%
6	38109	11	9.6%
5	38111	5	4.3%
5	38112	4	3.5%
4	38114	7	6.1%
3	38115	7	6.1%
3	38116	5	4.3%
4	38117	2	1.7%
3	38118	8	7.0%
2	38120	1	0.9%
2	38125	4	3.5%
6	38126	3	2.6%
7	38127	17	14.8%
1	38128	9	7.8%
1	38134	3	2.6%

Figure 1: Memphis Homicides by City Council District



Clearance Rates

Clearance rates for both homicides and violent crimes by the Memphis Police Department have remained fairly consistent despite large increases in reported homicides and violent crimes, particularly in the years from 2016-2019. Often, as homicides spike in a city, clearance rates fall. This can be seen in 2016, when the spike in homicides was not met with an increase in cleared cases as well.

Figure 2: Reported and Cleared Homicides by the Memphis Police Department

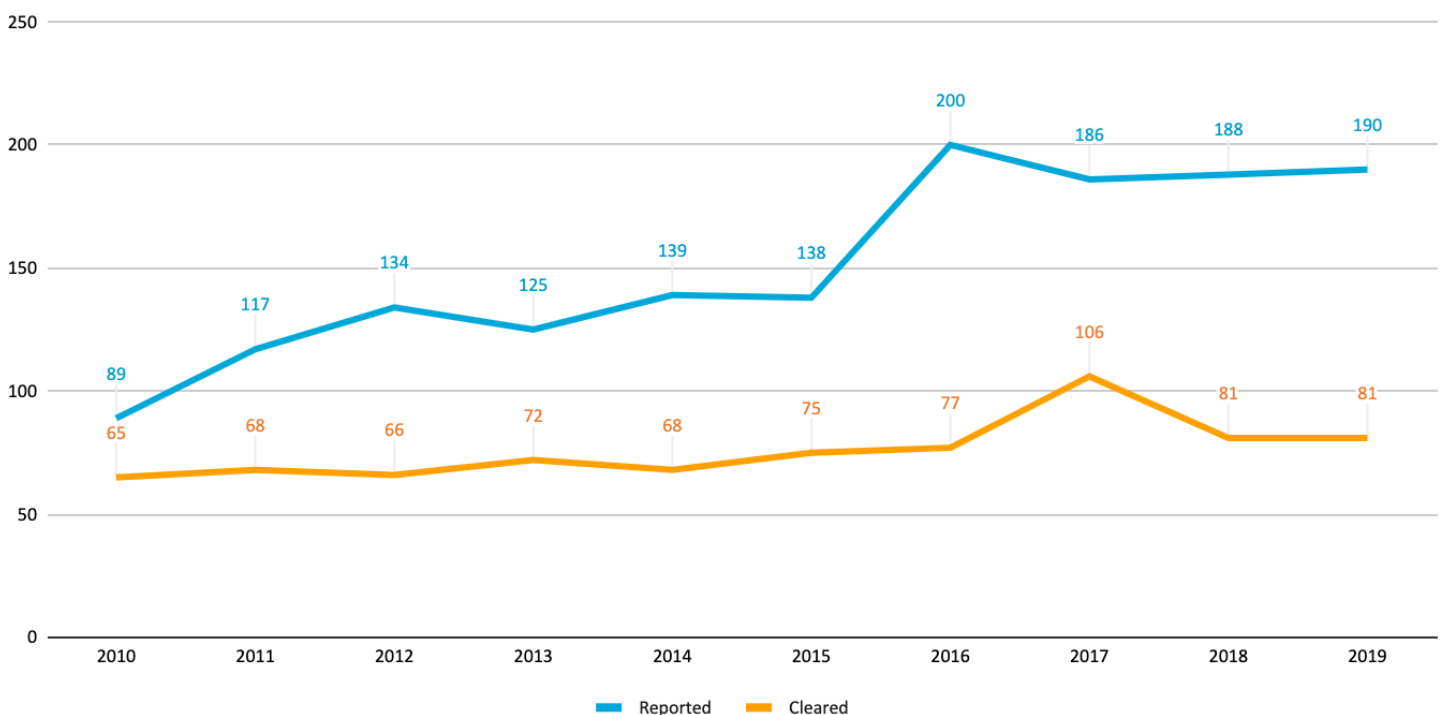


Figure 3: Reported and Cleared Violent Crimes by the Memphis Police Department

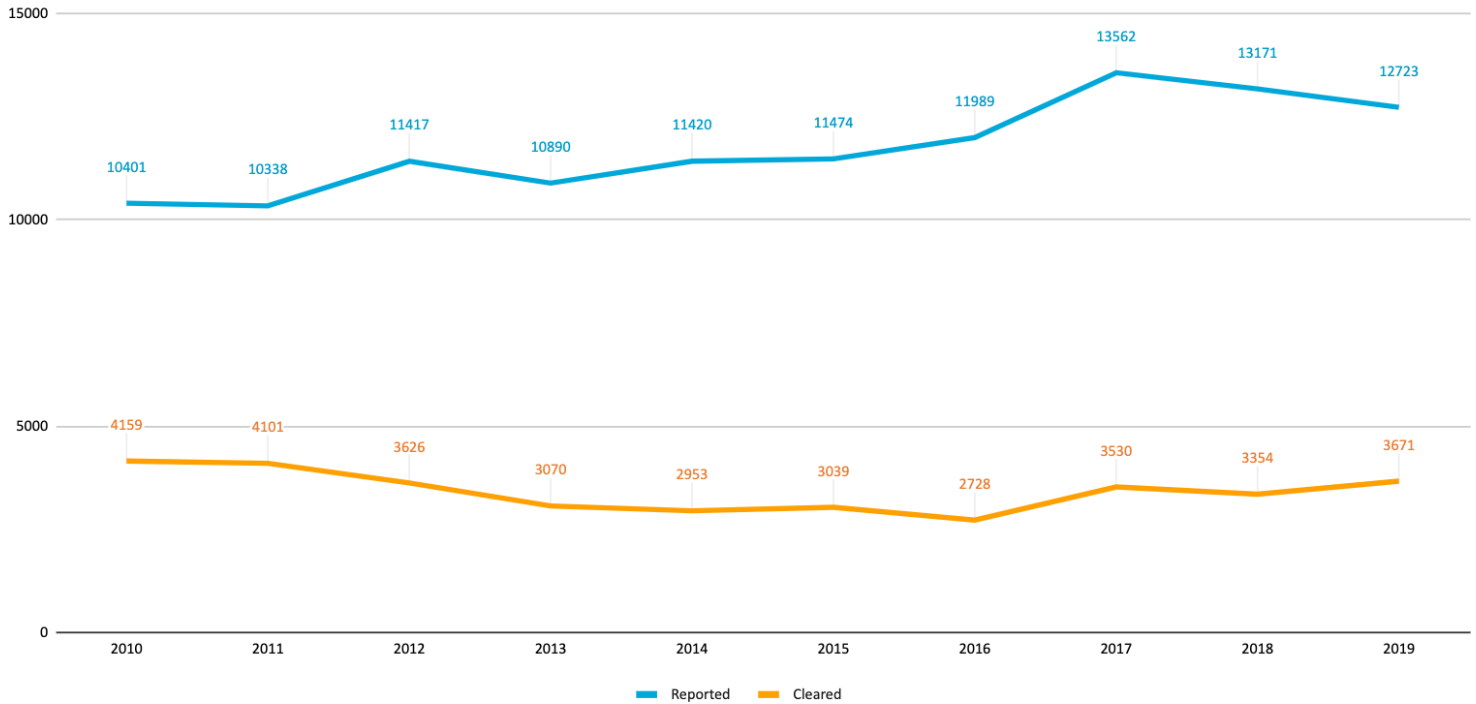


Table 8: Clearance Rate for Homicides per Year²

Year	Homicide Clearance Rate
2010	73.0%
2011	58.1%
2012	49.3%
2013	57.6%
2014	48.9%
2015	54.3%
2016	38.5%
2017	57.0%
2018	43.1%
2019	42.6%

²<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1pFPBwXsCTDnK6OB0BOU4frYCEOr8hQSn7IZIr8HbL64/edit?usp=sharing>

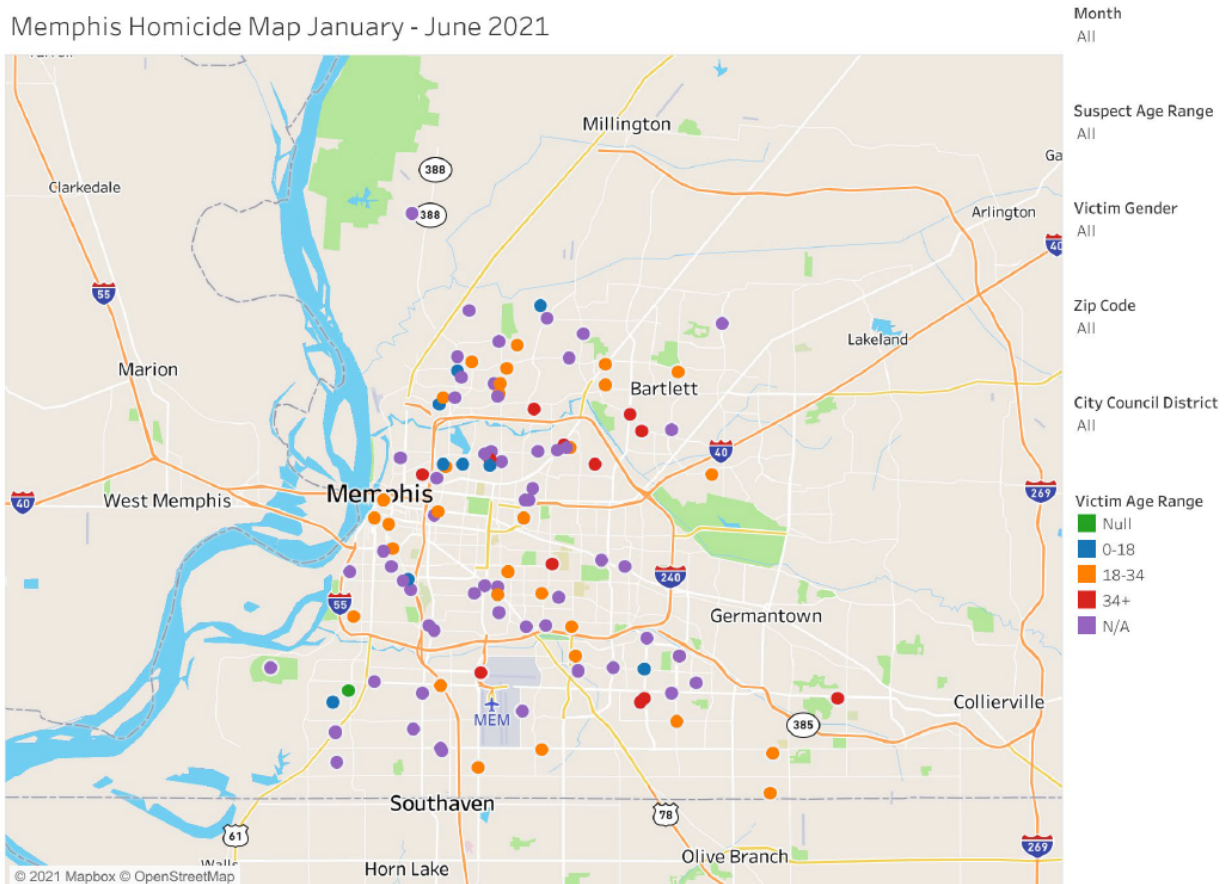
Table 9: Clearance Rate for FBI Part I Violent Crimes per Year³

Year	Violent Crime Clearance Rate
2010	40.0%
2011	39.7%
2012	31.8%
2013	28.2%
2014	22.8%
2015	26.5%
2016	22.8%
2017	26.0%
2018	25.5%
2019	28.9%

³<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1pFPBwXsCTDnK6OB0BOU4frYCEOr8hQSn7IZlr8HbL64/edit?usp=sharing>

Maps

The following map depicts 115 homicides during the period of January to June 2021 in Memphis, TN. An [interactive version](#) of this map is available as well. ⁴



* Note: Information depicted for each homicide on the map is sourced primarily from the [Gun Violence Archive](#). Not every detail is provided for every homicide as some cases have yet to have an individual or individuals charged or arrested for the crime. In some cases, multiple individuals may have been involved in a homicide, but only some were arrested and charged. Sometimes there are multiple victims, but only one shooter. In other instances, the victim(s) name(s) have not been released to the public. There are many homicide cases that have incomplete information.

Reccommendations

The victims and suspects of homicides and non-fatal shootings have very similar characteristics and risk factors. They are overwhelmingly young Black men, ages 18-34, and are likely well known to the criminal justice system. These findings generate the following recommendations:



1 Conduct a full Gun Violence Study Analysis.

Such an analysis would review each homicide and injury shooting over the past 12-24 months in detail, including the circumstances of the shooting, the group/crew dynamics in the city, and backgrounds of victims and suspects. This analysis helps further identify the small number of people at very high risk of gun violence.

2 Improve Weekly Shooting Reviews.

Weekly “Shooting Review” meetings should be review every shooting over the previous seven days and identify the shootings that have a likelihood for retaliation. Individuals likely to be retaliated against and those likely to retaliate are identified and prioritized for focused intervention efforts.

3 Improve and Expand Community based Violence Intervention.

Work with community and criminal justice partners to tailor interventions to those at the highest risk of violence.

- 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.
- Engage very high risk individuals in intensive, consistent, positive and trusting relationships with Outreach and Intervention Workers who are from the community and/or have credibility with the people they are serving.