

Gun Death in Illinois

ANNUAL REPORT



Violence Policy Center



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The Violence Policy Center (VPC) is a national nonprofit educational organization that conducts research and public education on violence in America and provides information and analysis to policymakers, journalists, advocates, and the general public.

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Introduction

This study, a joint project of One Aim Illinois^a and the Violence Policy Center,^b offers an overview of lethal gun violence in Illinois using the most recent data available at time of publication from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The study also compares Illinois firearms death data to other Great Lakes States and offers federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) firearms trace data on guns used in crime in the state. Throughout the study are quotes from Illinois residents impacted by gun violence who are members of the One Aim Survivors Council. Their voices remind us of the crucial fact that while statistics are necessary for the development of effective public policy, we must never lose sight of the human element of this ongoing tragedy that impacts individuals, families, and communities in Illinois and across the nation.

Overall Gun Death in Illinois

I never knew trauma like I know it now. There's not a day that goes by that I do not think about my children. There's not a day that I don't go by and find myself crying for another mother. It's not just a me problem. It's an us problem.

I just got taken in by the amazing work they [One Aim] were doing and I joined. It gave me a platform to tell my story.

— Delphine Cherry, lost her son and daughter to gun violence

Gun violence has been increasing both nationally as well as in Illinois. In 2021, guns claimed 1,995 lives in Illinois in suicides, homicides, and unintentional deaths (Table 1).

^a One Aim Illinois is a statewide gun violence prevention organization that educates, advocates, and organizes to end gun violence in Illinois. For more information, please see www.oneaimil.org.

^b The Violence Policy Center (VPC) is a national education and advocacy organization working to stop gun death and injury. For more information, please see www.vpc.org.

Table I. Firearm deaths in Illinois by year, 2017 — 2021¹

| | Total firearm deaths [#] | | Firearm homicide | | Firearm suicide | | Unintentional firearm death | |
|------|-----------------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| | Count | Rate* | Count | Rate* | Count | Rate* | Count | Rate* |
| 2017 | 1,543 | 12.1 | 934 | 7.5 | 577 | 4.3 | 11 | 0.1 |
| 2018 | 1,382 | 10.8 | 784 | 6.4 | 573 | 4.2 | -- | -- |
| 2019 | 1,367 | 10.8 | 791 | 6.6 | 540 | 4.0 | 16 | 0.1 |
| 2020 | 1,745 | 13.8 | 1,167 | 9.5 | 543 | 4.0 | 11 | 0.1 |
| 2021 | 1,995 | 16.0 | 1,292 | 10.7 | 656 | 4.9 | 15 | 0.1 |

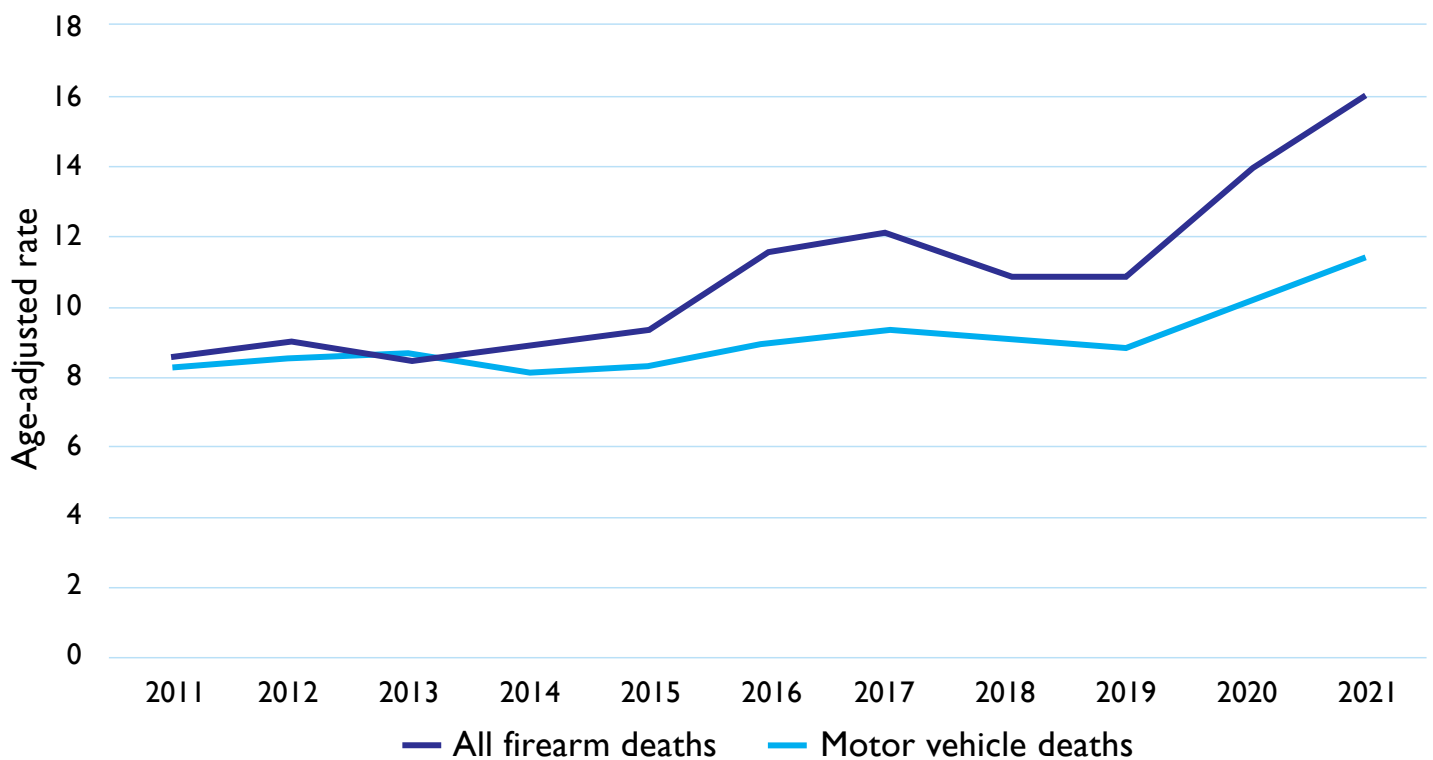
Total firearm deaths include homicides, suicides, unintentional deaths, and deaths of undetermined intent

* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000 population

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Since 2014, gun deaths have outpaced motor vehicle deaths across the state, a shocking fact when one considers a person’s daily exposure to motor vehicles as opposed to firearms (Figure 1). Compared to other states, Illinois has the 27th highest rate of overall gun death in the nation.

Figure I. Rates of firearm deaths and motor vehicle deaths in Illinois, 2011 — 2021¹



Comparison of homicide and suicide deaths in Illinois

The demographic characteristics of gun deaths vary between homicide and suicide deaths. For all firearm deaths, 57 percent of the victims were Black, while 42 percent of the victims were white (Table 2). Yet looking more closely at the mortality categories, sharp differences appear. More than three-quarters of firearm homicide victims are Black (79 percent), while more than three-quarters of firearm suicide deaths occur among white victims (83 percent). Hispanic victims accounted for 10 percent of all firearm deaths, 13 percent of firearm homicides, and five percent of firearm suicides. Victims of firearm homicide tend to be younger than those who die by firearm suicide. For all categories, only 12 percent of the victims were female, with the vast majority being male (88 percent).

Table 2. Firearm deaths in Illinois, 2021¹

| | All firearm deaths | Firearm homicide deaths | Firearm suicide deaths | Unintentional firearm deaths |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Total deaths | 1,995 (100%) | 1,292 (100%) | 656 (100%) | 15 (100%) |
| Sex | | | | |
| Male | 1,753 (88%) | 1,140 (88%) | 574 (88%) | 14 (93%) |
| Female | 242 (12%) | 152 (12%) | 82 (13%) | 1 (7%) |
| Age | | | | |
| < 10 | 12 (1%) | -- | -- | -- |
| 10-24 | 538 (27%) | 425 (33%) | 99 (15%) | -- |
| 25-44 | 894 (45%) | 696 (54%) | 183 (28%) | -- |
| 45-64 | 340 (17%) | 150 (12%) | 181 (28%) | -- |
| 65+ | 211 (11%) | 15 (1%) | 193 (29%) | -- |
| Race | | | | |
| Asian | 15 (1%) | -- | -- | -- |
| Black | 1,139 (57%) | 1,020 (79%) | 98 (15%) | -- |
| White | 832 (42%) | 260 (20%) | 546 (83%) | -- |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| More than one race | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| Hispanic | 208 (10%) | 165 (13%) | 36 (5%) | 1 (7%) |
| Not Hispanic | 1,786 (90%) | 1,127 (87%) | 620 (95%) | 14 (93%) |

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Homicide in Illinois

Now I talk about it [my story] because I know there are others, especially Black men, experiencing trauma. Not speaking out allows trauma and hurt to fester.

— Reverend Mike Latimore, impacted by multiple experiences of gun violence when he was threatened with a sawed-off shotgun and later lost his brother

In 2021, 1,292 lives were lost to gun homicide in Illinois (Table 3). The majority of homicides were firearm homicides (87 percent).

Table 3. Homicide deaths in Illinois, 2017 — 2021¹

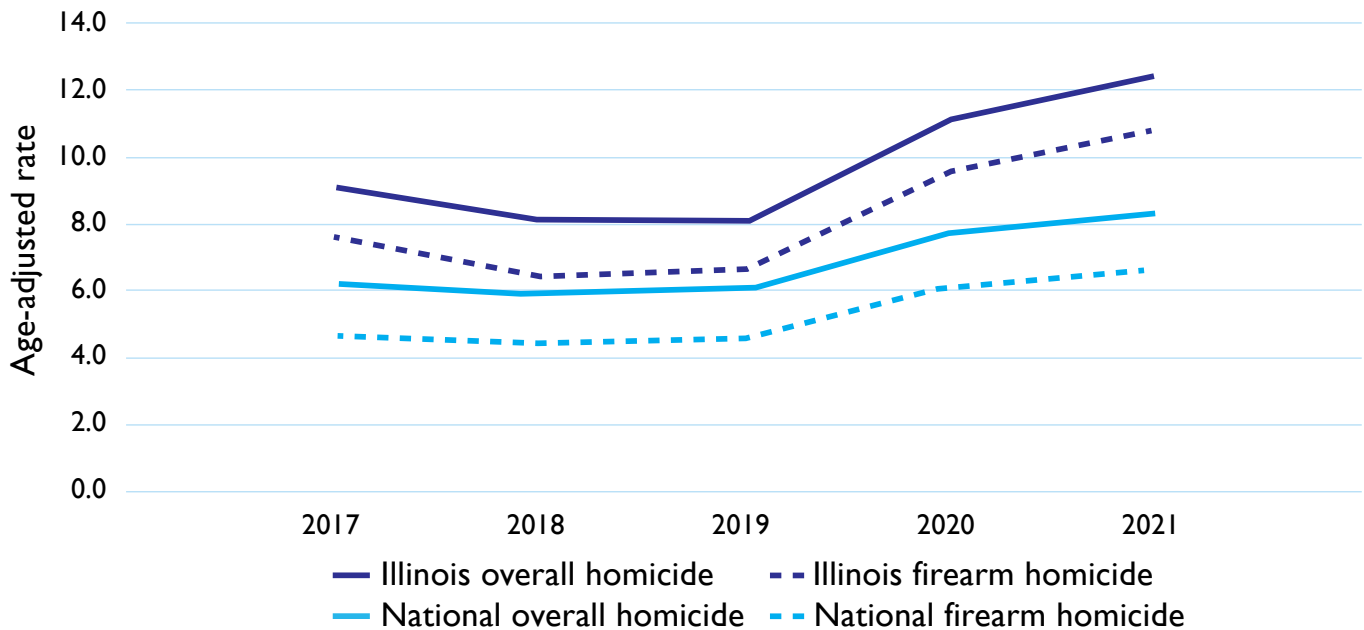
| | Overall homicide count | Overall homicide rate* | Firearm homicide count | Firearm homicide rate* | Percentage of homicides that are firearm homicides |
|------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 2017 | 1,120 | 9.0 | 934 | 7.5 | 83% |
| 2018 | 994 | 8.0 | 784 | 6.4 | 79% |
| 2019 | 979 | 8.0 | 791 | 6.6 | 81% |
| 2020 | 1,353 | 11.0 | 1,167 | 9.5 | 86% |
| 2021 | 1,487 | 12.3 | 1,292 | 10.7 | 87% |

* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000 population

Both overall homicide and firearm homicide rates in Illinois are higher than national rates. The overall homicide rate in Illinois increased from a rate of 9.0 per 100,000 in 2017 to 12.3 per 100,000 in 2021, and the firearm homicide rate increased from 7.5 per 100,000 in 2017 to 10.7 per 100,000 in 2021. (Figure 2). In comparison, the national homicide rate has increased from 6.1 per 100,000 in 2017 to 8.2 per 100,000 in 2021, and the firearm homicide rate has increased from 4.6 per 100,000 in 2017 to 6.6 per 100,000 in 2021.

Homicide was one of the leading causes of death in Illinois among younger age groups in 2021: the fourth leading cause of death among 10-14 year olds (80 percent committed with a gun); the second leading cause of death for 15-24 year olds (95 percent committed with a gun); the third leading cause of death among 25-34 year olds (94 percent committed with a gun); and, the seventh leading cause of death among 35-44 year olds (88 percent committed with a gun).²

Figure 2. Firearm homicide rates, 2017 — 2021¹



Both overall homicide and firearm homicide rates in Illinois were significantly higher among Black victims compared to white homicide and firearm homicide victims (Table 4). For both Black and white victims, guns were by far the most common weapon used in homicides (93 percent for Black victims and 70 percent for white victims).

Table 4. Firearm homicide in Illinois by race, 2021¹

| | Overall homicide count | Overall homicide rate* | Firearm homicide count | Firearm homicide rate* | Percentage of homicides that are firearm homicides |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Race | | | | | |
| Asian | 12 | 1.5 | -- | -- | -- |
| Black | 1,101 | 58.5 | 1,020 | 54.2 | 93% |
| White | 370 | 4.0 | 260 | 2.8 | 70% |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| More than one race | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ethnicity | | | | | |
| Hispanic | 194 | 7.9 | 165 | 6.6 | 85% |
| Not Hispanic | 1,291 | 13.4 | 1,127 | 11.8 | 87% |

* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000 population

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Many more males died of homicide in Illinois in 2021 compared to females (Table 5). Compared to the white population, Black males and females had substantially higher rates of both overall homicide and firearm homicide. The Black male homicide victimization rate of 105.6 per 100,000 was more than 17 times the white homicide victimization rate of 6.1 per 100,000. The Black male gun homicide victimization rate of 99.3 per 100,000 was more than 21 times the white male homicide victimization rate of 4.7 per 100,000. The Black female homicide victimization rate of 13.7 per 100,000 was more than seven times the white female homicide victimization rate of 1.8 per 100,000. The Black female gun homicide victimization rate of 11.2 per 100,000 was more than 12 times the white female gun homicide victimization rate of 0.9 per 100,000.

Table 5. Firearm homicide in Illinois by race and sex, 2021¹

| Male | Overall homicide count | Overall homicide rate* | Firearm homicide count | Firearm homicide rate* | Percentage of homicides that are firearm homicides |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Total deaths | 1,266 | 20.7 | 1,140 | 18.7 | 90% |
| Race | | | | | |
| Asian | 10 | 2.5 | -- | -- | -- |
| Black | 971 | 105.6 | 914 | 99.3 | 94% |
| White | 284 | 6.1 | 217 | 4.7 | 76% |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| More than one race | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ethnicity | | | | | |
| Hispanic | 163 | 12.8 | 146 | 11.4 | 90% |
| Not Hispanic | 1,102 | 22.9 | 994 | 20.8 | 90% |

| Female | Overall homicide count | Overall homicide rate* | Firearm homicide count | Firearm homicide rate* | Percentage of homicides that are firearm homicides |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Total deaths | 221 | 3.6 | 152 | 2.5 | 69% |
| Race | | | | | |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Black | 130 | 13.7 | 106 | 11.2 | 82% |
| White | 86 | 1.8 | 43 | 0.9 | 50% |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| More than one race | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ethnicity | | | | | |
| Hispanic | 31 | 2.7 | 19 | 1.6 | 61% |
| Not Hispanic | 189 | 3.9 | 133 | 2.8 | 70% |

* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000 population

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Because firearm homicides make up the majority of homicides that occurred in Illinois in 2021, the demographic characteristics of all homicide deaths are similar to those of firearm homicide deaths (Table 6). In 2021, males accounted for the vast majority of homicide victims (85 percent) and an even larger percentage of firearm homicide victims (88 percent). Females accounted for only 15 percent of all homicide victim deaths and an even smaller percentage of firearm homicide victim deaths (12 percent).

Table 6. Demographic characteristics of all homicide victims and firearm homicide victims in Illinois, 2021¹

| | All homicide deaths | Firearm homicide deaths |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Total deaths | 1,487 (100%) | 1,292 (100%) |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 1,266 (85%) | 1,140 (88%) |
| Female | 221 (15%) | 152 (12%) |
| Age | | |
| < 10 | 31 (2%) | -- |
| 10-24 | 451 (30%) | 425 (33%) |
| 25-44 | 756 (51%) | 696 (54%) |
| 45-64 | 211 (14%) | 150 (12%) |
| 65+ | 38 (3%) | 15 (1%) |
| Race | | |
| Asian | 12 (1%) | -- |
| Black | 1,101 (74%) | 1,020 (79%) |
| White | 370 (25%) | 260 (20%) |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | -- | -- |
| More than one race | -- | -- |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Hispanic | 194 (13%) | 165 (13%) |
| Not Hispanic | 1,291 (87%) | 1,127 (87%) |

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Suicide in Illinois

My brother took his own life with a gun. Now, when dealing with gun violence, we advocate for mental health because I feel like a lot of the reasoning behind gun violence is just because people don't have the right state of mind.

— Mahogany Mills, impacted by multiple experiences of gun violence when her brother shot himself and her child's father was murdered

In 2021, 656 lives were lost to gun suicide in Illinois (see Table 7). While less than half of suicides involved a firearm, this percentage has been increasing since 2019. Suicide was one of the leading causes of death across most age groups in 2021: second leading cause of death among 10-14 year olds, third leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds, second leading cause of death among 25-34 year olds, fifth leading cause of death among 35-44 year olds, and seventh leading cause of death among 45-54 year olds.²

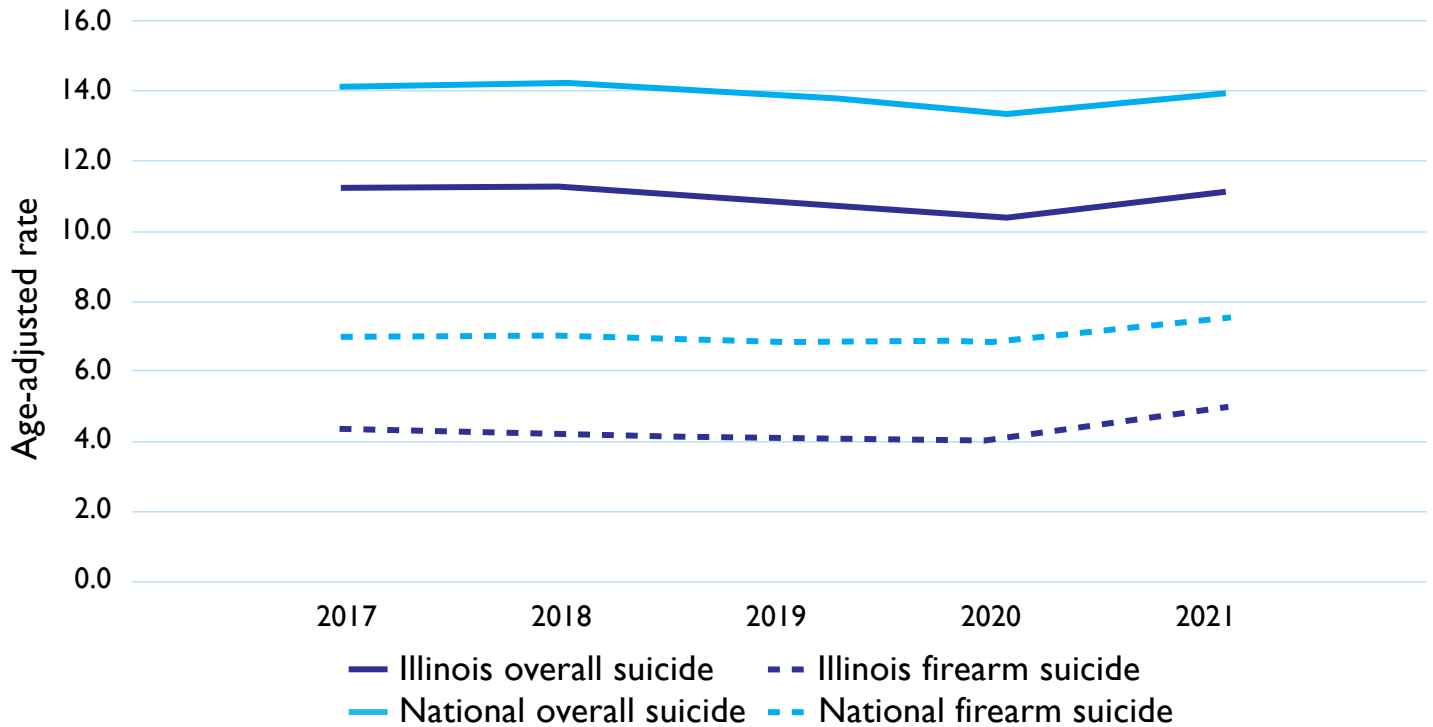
Table 7. Suicide deaths in Illinois, 2017 — 2021¹

| | Overall suicide count | Overall suicide rate* | Firearm suicide count | Firearm suicide rate* | Percentage of suicides that are firearm suicides |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 2017 | 1,474 | 11.2 | 577 | 4.3 | 39% |
| 2018 | 1,488 | 11.3 | 573 | 4.2 | 39% |
| 2019 | 1,439 | 10.9 | 540 | 4.0 | 38% |
| 2020 | 1,362 | 10.4 | 543 | 4.0 | 40% |
| 2021 | 1,454 | 11.1 | 656 | 4.9 | 45% |

* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000 population

Both the overall suicide rate and the rate of suicide by firearm is lower in Illinois compared to nationally, though both rates have increased in Illinois between 2020 and 2021 (Figure 3). The overall suicide rate in Illinois has remained relatively stable over the past few years, ranging from 11.2 per 100,000 in 2017 to 11.1 per 100,000 in 2021. The firearm suicide rate in Illinois has increased from 4.3 per 100,000 in 2017 to 4.9 per 100,000 in 2021. In comparison, the national suicide rate has also remained relatively stable with a rate of 14.0 per 100,000 in both 2017 and 2021, while the national firearm suicide rate has increased from 6.9 per 100,000 in 2017 to 7.5 per 100,000 in 2021.

Figure 3. Firearm suicide rates, 2017 — 2021¹



While overall suicide rates were highest among the white population in Illinois, rates of firearm suicide were the same between the white and Black populations (Table 8). A higher percentage of suicides among the Black population involved a firearm compared to the white population.

Table 8. Firearm suicide in Illinois by race, 2021¹

| | Overall suicide count | Overall suicide rate* | Firearm suicide count | Firearm suicide rate* | Percentage of suicides that are firearm suicides |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Race | | | | | |
| Asian | 40 | 4.8 | -- | -- | -- |
| Black | 176 | 9.3 | 98 | 5.2 | 56% |
| White | 1,222 | 12.0 | 546 | 5.2 | 45% |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| More than one race | 16 | 4.6 | -- | -- | -- |
| Ethnicity | | | | | |
| Hispanic | 140 | 5.9 | 36 | 1.5 | 26% |
| Not Hispanic | 1,314 | 12.1 | 620 | 5.6 | 47% |

* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000 population

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Many more males died of suicide in Illinois in 2021 compared to females — 1,133 males compared to 321 females (Table 9). The white male suicide rate was higher than the Black male suicide rate (19.1 per 100,000 compared to 14.3 per 100,000), as was the firearm suicide rate (9.4 per 100,000 compared to 9.0 per 100,000). For white and Black males, firearms were the most common means employed. While overall suicide rates were slightly higher among white females compared to Black females (5.1 per 100,000 compared to 4.9 per 100,000), firearm suicide rates were lower among white females compared to Black females (1.2 per 100,000 compared to 1.7 per 100,000).

Table 9. Firearm suicide in Illinois by race and sex, 2021¹

| Male | Overall suicide count | Overall suicide rate* | Firearm suicide count | Firearm suicide rate* | Percentage of suicides that are firearm suicides |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Total deaths | 1,133 | 17.6 | 574 | 8.9 | 51% |
| Race | | | | | |
| Asian | 30 | 7.5 | -- | -- | -- |
| Black | 128 | 14.3 | 81 | 9.0 | 63% |
| White | 966 | 19.1 | 484 | 9.4 | 50% |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| More than one race | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ethnicity | | | | | |
| Hispanic | 105 | 8.4 | 33 | 2.7 | 31% |
| Not Hispanic | 1,028 | 19.3 | 541 | 10.0 | 53% |

| Female | Overall suicide count | Overall suicide rate* | Firearm suicide count | Firearm suicide rate* | Percentage of suicides that are firearm suicides |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Total deaths | 321 | 4.9 | 82 | 1.2 | 26% |
| Race | | | | | |
| Asian | 10 | 2.3 | -- | -- | -- |
| Black | 48 | 4.9 | 17 | 1.7 | 35% |
| White | 256 | 5.1 | 62 | 1.2 | 24% |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| More than one race | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ethnicity | | | | | |
| Hispanic | 35 | 3.1 | -- | -- | -- |
| Not Hispanic | 286 | 5.3 | 79 | 1.5 | 28% |

* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000 population

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For all suicide deaths, 78 percent occurred among males. For firearm suicide deaths, 88 percent occurred among males (Table 10).

Table 10. Demographic characteristics of all suicides and firearm suicides in Illinois, 2021¹

| | All suicide deaths | Firearm suicide deaths |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Total deaths | 1,454 (100%) | 656 (100%) |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 1,133 (78%) | 574 (88%) |
| Female | 321 (22%) | 82 (13%) |
| Age | | |
| < 10 | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| 10-24 | 213 (15%) | 99 (15%) |
| 25-44 | 500 (34%) | 183 (28%) |
| 45-64 | 466 (32%) | 181 (28%) |
| 65+ | 275 (19%) | 193 (29%) |
| Race | | |
| Asian | 40 (3%) | -- |
| Black | 176 (12%) | 98 (15%) |
| White | 1,222 (84%) | 546 (83%) |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | -- | -- |
| More than one race | 16 (1%) | -- |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Hispanic | 140 (10%) | 36 (5%) |
| Not Hispanic | 1,314 (90%) | 620 (95%) |

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Unintentional Deaths

Unintentional firearm deaths represent a very low percentage of overall firearm deaths in Illinois each year (Table 1). In 2019 there were 16 unintentional firearm deaths, 11 deaths in 2020, and 15 deaths in 2021.¹

Illinois Gun Deaths Compared to Other Great Lakes States

When I lost my sister, I didn't just lose my sister, part of that I lost my mother as well. She was now a mother that was parenting out of fear. Mourning is not something that you do over a 12-week time period under FMLA [the Family and Medical Leave Act]; it is something that can possibly affect and impact your life for the rest of your life.

— Tamika Howard, lost her older sister and younger brother in separate gun violence tragedies

When compared to other Great Lakes states (Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin), Illinois had the highest overall homicide and firearm homicide rates per 100,000 for individuals of all ages as well as those age 24 and younger (Table 11). In 2021, Illinois' overall homicide rate was 12.3 per 100,000, while Indiana had the second-highest rate among Great Lakes states — 9.6 per 100,000. Illinois also had the highest firearm homicide rate, 10.7 per 100,000. Indiana and Ohio shared the second highest firearm homicide rate: 8.0 per 100,000. Among those age 24 and younger, Illinois had both the highest overall homicide rate (12.2 per 100,000) and highest firearm homicide rate (10.9 per 100,000). Indiana had the second highest rates in this category: 9.7 per 100,000 and 8.4 per 100,000 respectively.

Table 11. Homicide and firearm homicide rates among those age 24 and younger in the Great Lakes region, ranked by homicide rate, 2021¹

| | All ages | | Age 24 and younger | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Homicide rate | Firearm homicide rate | Homicide rate [^] | Firearm homicide rate [^] |
| Illinois | 12.3 | 10.7 | 12.2 | 10.9 |
| Indiana | 9.6 | 8.0 | 9.7 | 8.4 |
| Wisconsin | 6.3 | 5.3 | 6.8 | 6.0 |
| Minnesota | 4.3 | 3.1 | 3.9 | 3.1 |
| Ohio | 9.3 | 8.0 | 8.8 | 7.9 |
| Pennsylvania | 9.2 | 7.2 | 8.8 | 7.6 |
| Michigan | 8.7 | 7.5 | 7.7 | 6.8 |

[^] Rates for individuals age 24 and younger are not adjusted for age

Illinois Crime Gun Trace Data from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)

I kept saying, that's my daughter. And I'm looking at all these bullet casings on the ground, and I'm saying to myself...Why would somebody have a gun that shoots that many shots? I didn't understand.

— Alice Norris, daughter shot and killed during a drive-by shooting

In 2022, a total of 19,706 firearms were recovered in Illinois and traced. Almost all of the firearms recovered and traced were handguns — 82 percent were pistols and six percent were revolvers (Table 12).

Table 12. Firearm types with an Illinois recovery, 2022³

| Firearm type | Number (%) recovered |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Pistols | 16,127 (82%) |
| Revolvers | 1,271 (6%) |
| Rifles | 1,186 (6%) |
| Shotguns | 776 (4%) |
| Unknown types | 122 (1%) |
| Machine guns | 106 (1%) |
| Other* | 118 (1%) |

* Other includes Derringers, Receivers/Frames, Any Other Weapons, Silencers, a Combination, and a Flare Gun

Almost half of firearms recovered in Illinois were traced because the weapon was under investigation (44 percent) (Table 13). Twenty-one percent of firearms were traced due to weapon offense.

Table 13. Top categories reported on firearm traces with an Illinois recovery, 2022³

| Reason for firearm trace | Number (%) of firearms traced |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Firearm Under Investigation | 8,614 (44%) |
| Weapon Offense | 4,146 (21%) |
| Possession of Weapon | 2,984 (15%) |
| Found Firearm | 1,291 (7%) |
| Dangerous Drugs | 405 (2%) |
| Family Offense | 395 (2%) |
| Aggravated Assault | 287 (1%) |
| Homicide | 279 (1%) |
| Suicide | 207 (1%) |
| Firing Weapon | 154 (1%) |

Note: There were 944 additional traces that were associated with other categories

The state where the gun originated (“source state”) was identified in 15,353 traces.³ Of these traces, almost half of the firearms recovered in Illinois originated in-state (49 percent), while 23 percent originated in other states of the Great Lakes region (Table 14).

Table 14. Source states for firearms with an Illinois recovery, 2022³

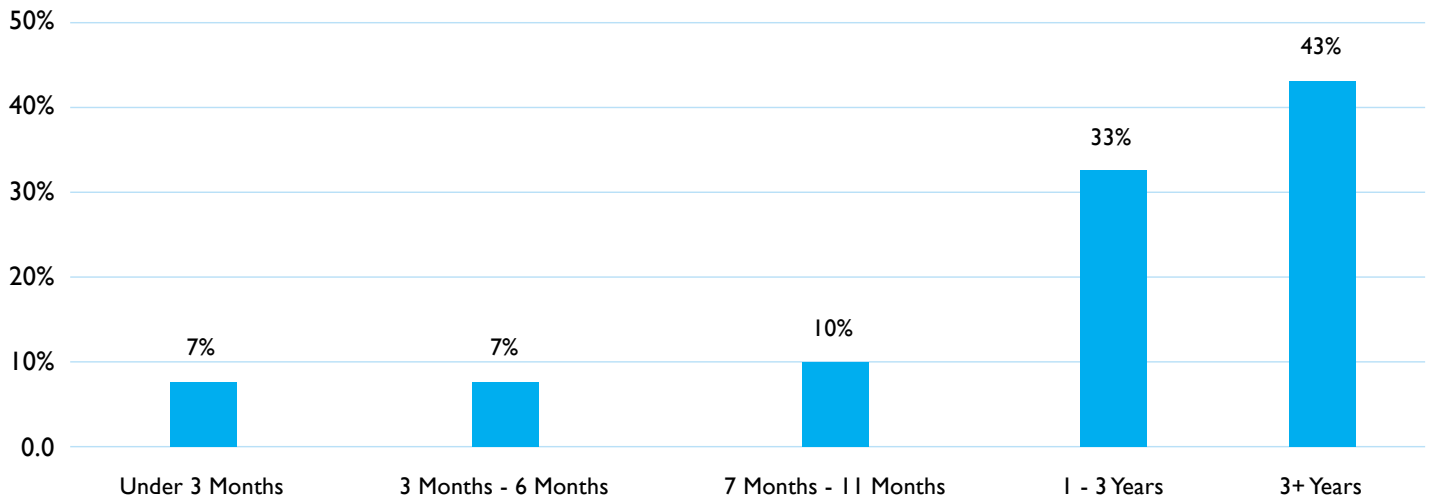
| Source state | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| In-state | 7,479 (49%) |
| Other Great Lakes states* | 3,508 (23%) |
| Other named states | 3,502 (23%) |

* Great Lakes states include Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Michigan

Note: An additional 34 unnamed states, Guam, and Puerto Rico accounted for 864 other traces.

Forty-three percent of the firearms traced were first used in a crime reported to law enforcement three or more years after the weapon was originally purchased (Figure 4).

Figure 4. ‘Time-to-crime’ percentages for firearms with an Illinois recovery, 2022³



Where information about the age of possessors was available, one-third of possessors were age 24 or younger (Table 15).

Table 15. Age of possessors of firearms with an Illinois recovery, 2022³

| Age category | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 17 and under | 691 (7%) |
| 18-24 | 2,861 (28%) |
| 25-30 | 2,259 (22%) |
| 31-50 | 3,217 (31%) |
| 51+ | 1,240 (12%) |

Forty-four percent of firearms recovered in Illinois were recovered in Chicago (Table 16).

Table 16. Top recovery cities for firearms with an Illinois recovery, 2022³

| City | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Chicago | 8,671 (44%) |
| Rockford | 577 (3%) |
| Springfield | 537 (3%) |
| Peoria | 374 (2%) |
| East St. Louis | 325 (2%) |
| Joliet | 291 (1%) |
| Decatur | 220 (1%) |
| Champaign | 209 (1%) |
| Benton | 197 (1%) |
| Chicago Heights | 161 (1%) |

NOTE: There were 592 additional municipalities that accounted for 8,138 other traces. The recovery city could not be determined for six traces.

Conclusion

It's possible because gun violence is preventable. With every movement, with every march, with every sharing of the story, with every speech at a school, with every gathering, with every action that we do. Including bills that are passed. Conversations that we have change hearts and minds.

Together we can end gun violence.

— Millie Burgos, daughter shot and killed by a stray bullet

Firearms death remains an ongoing public health crisis in Illinois. Key findings presented in this report include increasing firearm homicide and suicide rates in the state, and a disproportionately high rate of firearm homicide victimization of the Black population. Illinois has the highest homicide and firearm homicide rates among young people compared to other states in the Great Lakes region. Approximately half of recovered firearms originated outside of Illinois and handguns are the most common type of firearm recovered in Illinois and traced. Slightly less than half of recovered firearms were first used in a crime reported to law enforcement three or more years after purchase. One-third of firearm possessors were age 24 or younger.

The data presented in this report are crucial to illustrate the devastating impact of fatal gun violence on Illinois residents. Such data are essential to aid organizations like One Aim Illinois shape their policy priorities and advocate for gun violence prevention laws to protect communities in their state. One Aim policy successes in 2023 included passage of the Firearms Industry Responsibility Act (FIRA), which bans gun marketing that targets youth or would promote illegal paramilitary and the Protect Illinois Communities Act, which bans assault weapons in the state. One Aim policy priorities for 2024 include: improving the Firearm Remedy for the Domestic Violence Act, expanding the Firearm Restraining Order Act, emphasizing the importance of safe gun storage, expanding community violence intervention programs, and continuing efforts to curb illegal gun trafficking.

Just as important as the data are the voices of those who have experienced gun violence firsthand. The stories of survivors and family members who have lost loved ones illustrate the tragic toll gun violence has on families and communities and serve as a call to action to end gun violence in Illinois and beyond.

I am a mom and my oldest daughter came home from kindergarten one day and she was telling me about a lockdown drill that they had to do. It wasn't until that moment that I was like alright, that is it I have to do more than what I've been doing. These little kids you shouldn't have to live like this and they shouldn't have to grow up in this.

— Alicia Schemel, father shot and killed in his car

Endnotes

1. CDC WISQARS Fatal and Nonfatal Injury Reports. Accessed on August 22, 2023. Available at: <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/reports/>.
2. CDC WISQARS Explore Leading Causes of Death. Accessed on August 22, 2023. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/LeadingCauses.html>.
3. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Firearms Trace Data: Illinois - 2022. For more information see: <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-illinois-2022>.



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