

Gun Death in Illinois

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Violence Policy Center

One Aim
ILLINOIS

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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. It utilizes data from the year 2022, the most recent and comprehensive data available at time of publication from the WISQARS database maintained by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).¹

Utilizing the CDC data not only allows for a detailed examination of the full range of firearms death in Illinois (homicide, suicide, and unintentional) but also allows for year-over-year trend analysis by sex, age, race, and ethnicity. It also allows for comparison of these rates not only to national data, but other Great Lakes states.

The study also contains profiles of members of [One Aim Illinois' 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, impacting individuals, families, and communities in Illinois and across the nation.

Overall Gun Death in Illinois

Gun violence has a significant impact on communities: both nationally as well as in Illinois. In 2022, guns claimed 48,204 lives in the United States. Of these, 1,798 Illinois lives were lost to guns in suicides, homicides, unintentional, and other deaths (Table 1).

Table 1. Firearm deaths in Illinois by year, 2018 — 2022¹

| | Total firearm deaths [#] | Firearm homicide | Firearm suicide | Unintentional firearm death |
|------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 2018 | 1,382 | 784 | 573 | -- |
| 2019 | 1,367 | 791 | 540 | 15 |
| 2020 | 1,745 | 1,167 | 543 | 11 |
| 2021 | 1,995 | 1,292 | 656 | 16 |
| 2022 | 1,798 | 1,091 | 676 | -- |

[#] Total firearm deaths include homicides, legal intervention deaths, suicides, unintentional deaths, and deaths of undetermined intent

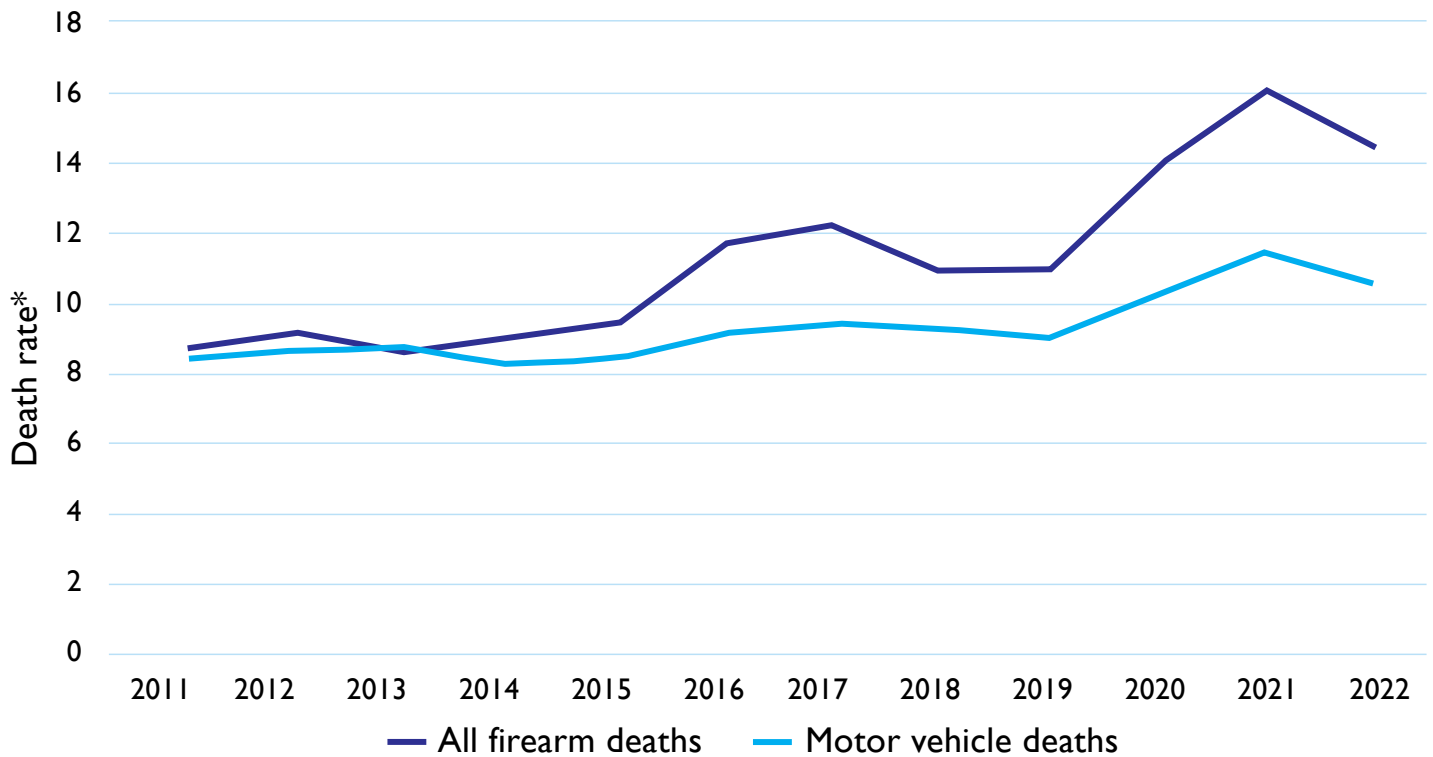
-- Indicates value has been suppressed because the number is too small to publish due to privacy concerns (nine or fewer deaths)

^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.

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, in 2022 Illinois had the 30th highest rate of overall gun death in the nation.

Figure 1. Rates of firearm deaths and motor vehicle deaths in Illinois, 2011 — 2022¹



* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000

Comparison of homicide and suicide deaths in Illinois

The demographic characteristics of gun deaths vary between homicide and suicide deaths. For all firearm deaths, 51.0 percent of the victims were Black, while 35.5 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 were Black (76.4 percent), while more than three-quarters of firearm suicide deaths occurred among white victims (79.9 percent). Hispanic victims accounted for 12.1 percent of all firearm deaths, 14.9 percent of firearm homicides, and 7.4 percent of firearm suicides. Victims of firearm homicide tended to be younger than those who died by firearm suicide. For all categories, only 12.8 percent of the victims were female, with the vast majority being male (87.2 percent).

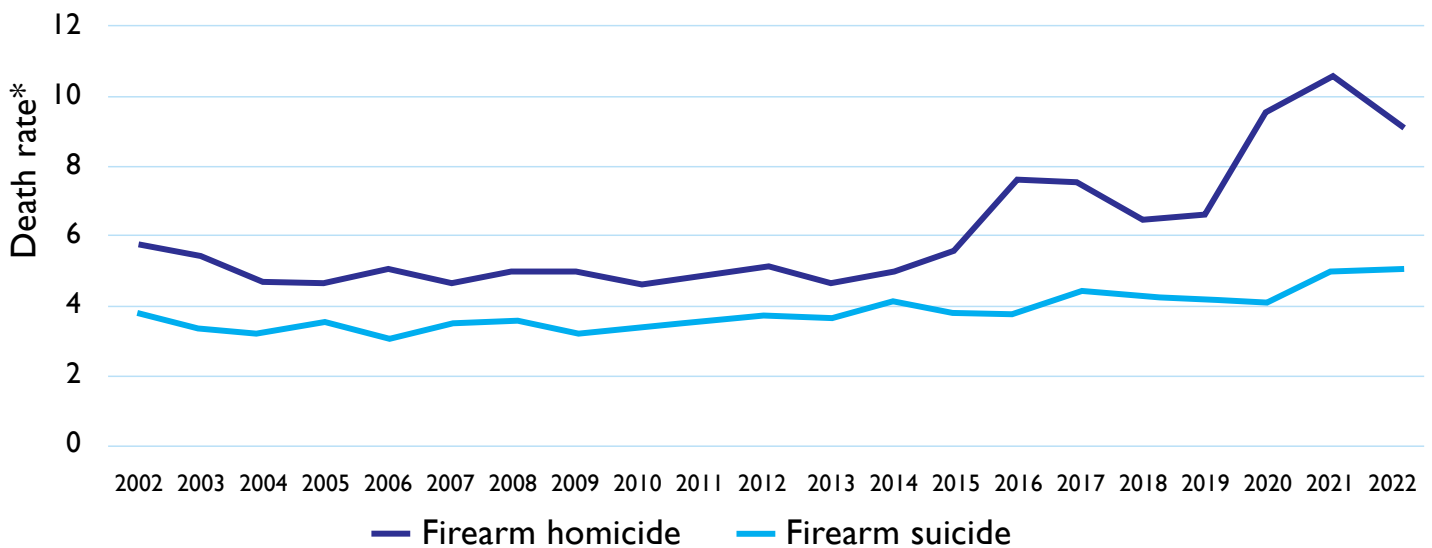
Table 2. Firearm deaths in Illinois, 2022¹

| | All firearm deaths | Firearm homicide deaths | Firearm suicide deaths | Unintentional firearm deaths |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Total deaths | 1,798 (100.0%) | 1,091 (100.0%) | 676 (100.0%) | -- |
| Sex | | | | |
| Male | 1,568 (87.2%) | 949 (87.0%) | 594 (87.9%) | -- |
| Female | 230 (12.8%) | 142 (13.0%) | 82 (12.1%) | -- |
| Age | | | | |
| < 10 | 11 (0.6%) | 10 (0.9%) | 0 (0.0%) | -- |
| 10-24 | 434 (24.1%) | 344 (31.5%) | 85 (12.6%) | -- |
| 25-44 | 815 (45.3%) | 606 (55.5%) | 195 (28.8%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| 45-64 | 332 (18.5%) | 107 (9.8%) | 214 (31.7%) | -- |
| 65+ | 206 (11.5%) | 24 (2.2%) | 182 (26.9%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Race and ethnicity | | | | |
| American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic | -- | 0 (0.0%) | -- | 0 (0.0%) |
| Asian, non-Hispanic | 11 (0.6%) | -- | -- | 0 (0.0%) |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 917 (51.0%) | 834 (76.4%) | 75 (11.1%) | -- |
| White, non-Hispanic | 639 (35.5%) | 81 (7.4%) | 540 (79.9%) | -- |
| More than one race, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | -- | 0 (0.0%) |
| Hispanic | 217 (12.1%) | 163 (14.9%) | 50 (7.4%) | -- |

-- Indicates value has been suppressed because the number is too small to publish due to privacy concerns (nine or fewer deaths)

Figure 2 shows how firearm homicide and firearm suicide rates have changed in Illinois over the last two decades. Firearm homicide rates have increased dramatically over the past several years, with firearm suicide rates also increasing, albeit more incrementally.

Figure 2. Rates of firearm homicide and firearm suicide in Illinois, 2002 — 2022¹



* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000

Homicide in Illinois

In 2022, 1,091 lives were lost to gun homicide in Illinois (Table 3). The majority of homicides were firearm homicides (83.2 percent).

Table 3. Homicide deaths in Illinois, 2018 — 2022¹

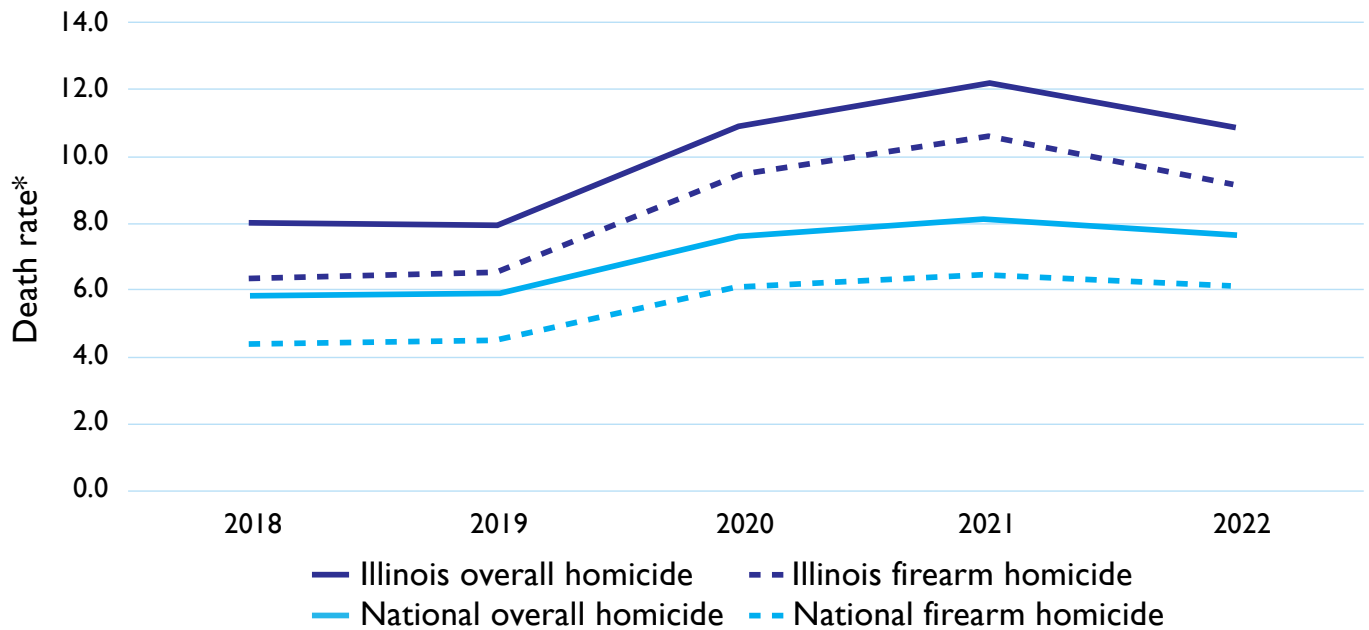
| | Overall homicide count | Overall homicide rate* | Firearm homicide count | Firearm homicide rate* | Percentage of homicides that are firearm homicides |
|------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 2018 | 994 | 8.0 | 784 | 6.4 | 78.9% |
| 2019 | 979 | 8.0 | 791 | 6.6 | 80.8% |
| 2020 | 1,353 | 11.0 | 1,167 | 9.5 | 86.3% |
| 2021 | 1,487 | 12.2 | 1,292 | 10.6 | 86.9% |
| 2022 | 1,312 | 10.9 | 1,091 | 9.2 | 83.2% |

* 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 8.0 per 100,000 in 2018 to 10.9 per 100,000 in 2022, and the firearm homicide rate increased from 6.4 per 100,000 in 2018 to 9.2 per 100,000 in 2022 (Figure 3). In comparison, the national homicide rate has increased from 5.9 per 100,000 in 2018 to 7.7 per 100,000 in 2022, and the firearm homicide rate has increased from 4.4 per 100,000 in 2018 to 6.2 per 100,000 in 2022.

Homicide was one of the leading causes of death in Illinois among younger age groups. In 2022, homicide was: the second leading cause of death among 10 to 14 year olds (87.5 percent committed with a gun); the second leading cause of death for 15 to 24 year olds (93.9 percent committed with a gun); the second leading cause of death among 25 to 34 year olds (91.0 percent committed with a gun); and, the fifth leading cause of death among 35 to 44 year olds (85.6 percent committed with a gun).²

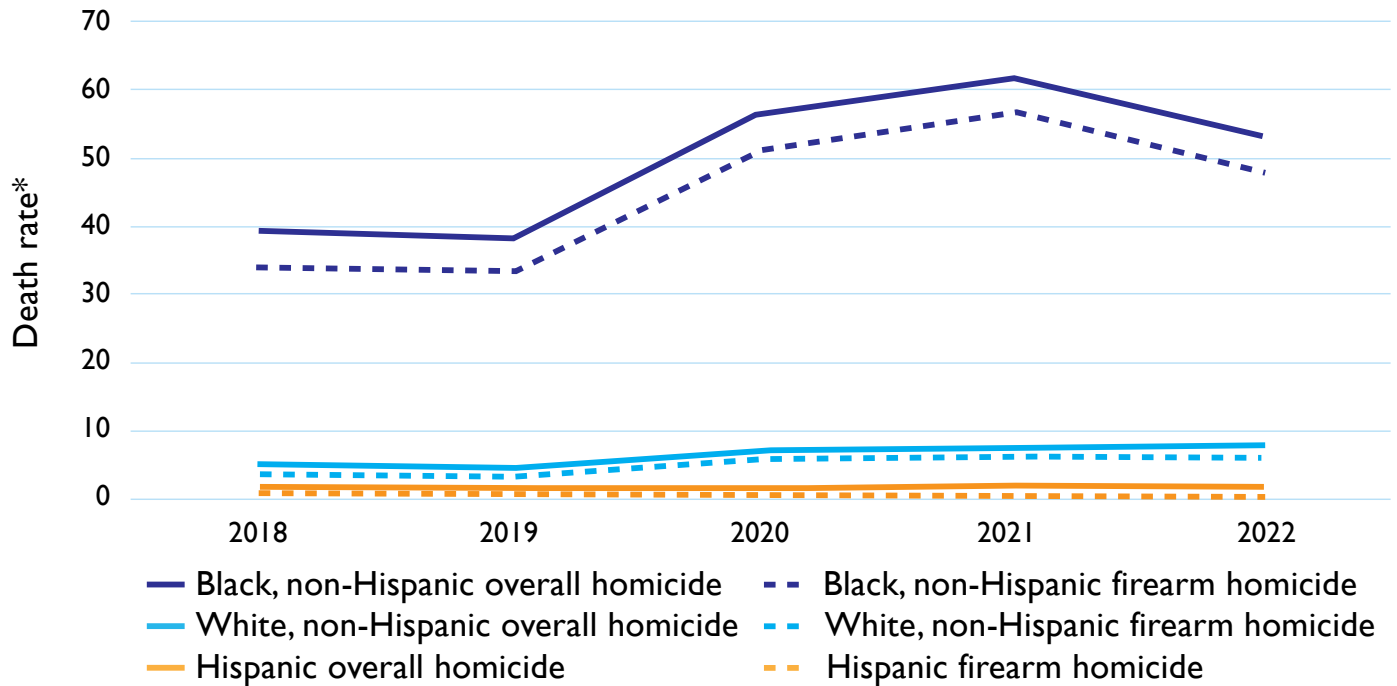
Figure 3. Homicide and firearm homicide rates, 2018 — 2022¹



* Rates are adjusted for age and per 100,000

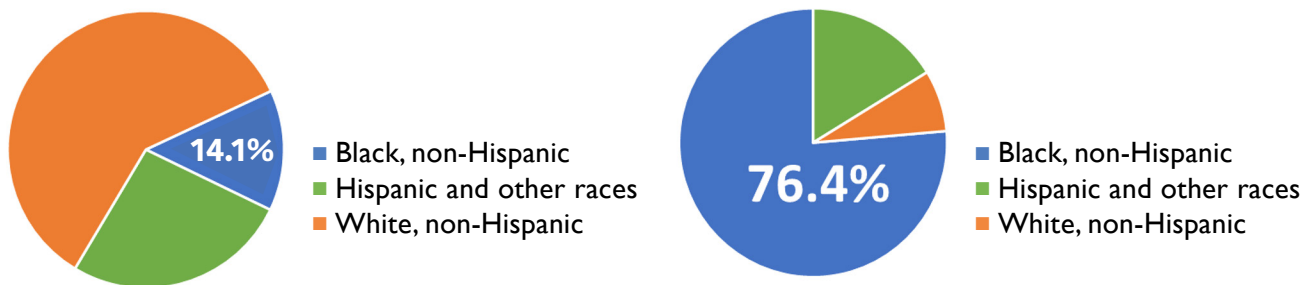
Both overall homicide and firearm homicide rates in Illinois were significantly higher among Black, non-Hispanic victims compared to white, non-Hispanic homicide and firearm homicide victims (Figure 4). In 2022, Black Illinois residents were more than 39 times more likely to die by firearm homicide compared to white residents — the Black firearm homicide rate was 47.2 per 100,000 and the white firearm homicide rate was 1.2 per 100,000. Hispanic Illinois residents were more than five times more likely to die by firearm homicide compared to white residents — the Hispanic population had a firearm homicide rate of 6.6 per 100,000. These racial disparities are particularly concerning when considering the racial breakdown of the Illinois population. While only 14.1 percent of the state’s population is Black, more than three-quarters of the state’s firearm homicide deaths occur in the Black population (76.4 percent) (Figure 5).

Figure 4. Illinois' homicide and firearm homicide rates by race, 2018 — 2022¹



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

Figure 5. Percentage of Illinois residents by race and ethnicity (left figure); Percentage of firearm homicide victims by race and ethnicity (right figure), 2022¹



Many more males died of homicide in Illinois in 2022 compared to females (Table 4). 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 93.7 per 100,000 was more than 31 times the white male homicide victimization rate of 3.0 per 100,000. The Black male firearm homicide victimization rate of 86.2 per 100,000 was more than 50 times the white male firearm homicide victimization rate of 1.7 per 100,000. The Black female homicide victimization rate of 13.5 per 100,000 was more than eight times the white female homicide victimization rate of 1.6 per 100,000. The Black female firearm homicide victimization rate of 10.3 per 100,000 was more than 17 times the white female firearm homicide victimization rate of 0.6 per 100,000.

Table 4. Firearm homicide in Illinois by race and sex, 2022¹

| Male | Overall homicide count | Overall homicide rate* | Firearm homicide count | Firearm homicide rate* | Percentage of homicides that are firearm homicides |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Total Deaths | 1,099 (100.0%) | 18.1 | 949 (100.0%) | 15.7 | 86.4% |
| Race and ethnicity | | | | | |
| American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic | 0 (0.0%) | 0.0 | 0 (0.0%) | 0.0 | 0.0% |
| Asian, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 805 (73.2%) | 93.7 | 740 (78.0%) | 86.2 | 91.9% |
| White, non-Hispanic | 106 (9.6%) | 3.0 | 58 (6.1%) | 1.7 | 54.7% |
| More than one race, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 172 (15.7%) | 13.9 | 142 (15.0%) | 11.2 | 82.6% |

| Female | Overall homicide count | Overall homicide rate* | Firearm homicide count | Firearm homicide rate* | Percentage of homicides that are firearm homicides |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Total deaths | 213 (100.0%) | 3.5 | 142 (100.0%) | 2.4 | 66.7% |
| Race and ethnicity | | | | | |
| American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic | 0 (0.0%) | 0.0 | 0 (0.0%) | 0.0 | 0.0% |
| Asian, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 124 (58.2%) | 13.5 | 94 (66.2%) | 10.3 | 75.8% |
| White, non-Hispanic | 55 (25.8%) | 1.6 | 23 (16.2%) | 0.6 | 41.8% |
| More than one race, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 27 (12.7%) | 2.1 | 21 (14.8%) | 1.7 | 77.8% |

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

-- Indicates value has been suppressed because the number is too small to publish due to privacy concerns (nine or fewer deaths)

Because firearm homicides make up the majority of homicides that occurred in Illinois in 2022, the demographic characteristics of all homicide deaths are similar to those of firearm homicide deaths (Table 5). In 2022, males accounted for the vast majority of homicide victims (83.8 percent) and an even larger percentage of firearm homicide victims (87.0 percent). Females accounted for only 16.2 percent of all homicide victim deaths and an even smaller percentage of firearm homicide victim deaths (13.0 percent).

Table 5. Demographic characteristics of all homicide victims and firearm homicide victims in Illinois, 2022¹

| | All homicide deaths | Firearm homicide deaths |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Total deaths | 1,312 (100.0%) | 1,091 (100.0%) |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 1,099 (83.8%) | 949 (87.0%) |
| Female | 213 (16.2%) | 142 (13.0%) |
| Age | | |
| < 10 | 41 (3.1%) | 10 (0.9%) |
| 10-24 | 368 (28.0%) | 344 (31.5%) |
| 25-44 | 681 (51.9%) | 606 (55.5%) |
| 45-64 | 164 (12.5%) | 107 (9.8%) |
| 65+ | 56 (4.3%) | 24 (2.2%) |
| Race and ethnicity | | |
| American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Asian, non-Hispanic | -- | -- |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 929 (70.8%) | 834 (76.4%) |
| White, non-Hispanic | 161 (12.3%) | 81 (7.4%) |
| More than one race, non-Hispanic | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 199 (15.2%) | 163 (14.9%) |

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LaToya Smith



LaToya Smith (left) and Yolanda Androzzo, Executive Director of One Aim Illinois (right)

In 2012, LaToya's son, Timothy, was shot and killed during an armed robbery while attempting to protect patrons and employees of the liquor store where he worked.

My son, trying to protect the workers...shuffled everyone back to the storeroom. And he ended up getting shot in the chest and died on the storeroom floor.

His death has impacted myself and my family's everyday life. We've become more protective of each other and always want to know where everyone is.

Through the One Aim Survivors Council, I have been able to speak out and be around other mothers. That is what gave me strength to continue to keep going and wanting to even get out of bed in the morning. The other mothers gave me purpose and they continue to give me purpose.

We've had to be very strong women because most of us are mothers of other children, and we can't just fall apart and give up. A lot of us are sisters. We have become sisters.

Because of One Aim, I have learned and know what it is to be in the fight. It's a great thing to be out here and feel like you have a purpose. We can come together. We start with us and we can just continue to grow.

Through the Survivors Council I get the support I need and know that the fight isn't over. There's always stuff that still needs to be done.

As long as I'm here, I'm with One Aim.

Suicide in Illinois

In 2022, 676 lives were lost to gun suicide in Illinois (see Table 6). While less than half of suicides involved a firearm, this percentage has been increasing in recent years. Suicide was one of the leading causes of death across most age groups. In 2022 suicide was the: fourth leading cause of death among 10-14 year olds; third leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds; third leading cause of death among 25-34 year olds; fourth leading cause of death among 35-44 year olds; and, sixth leading cause of death among 45-54 year olds.²

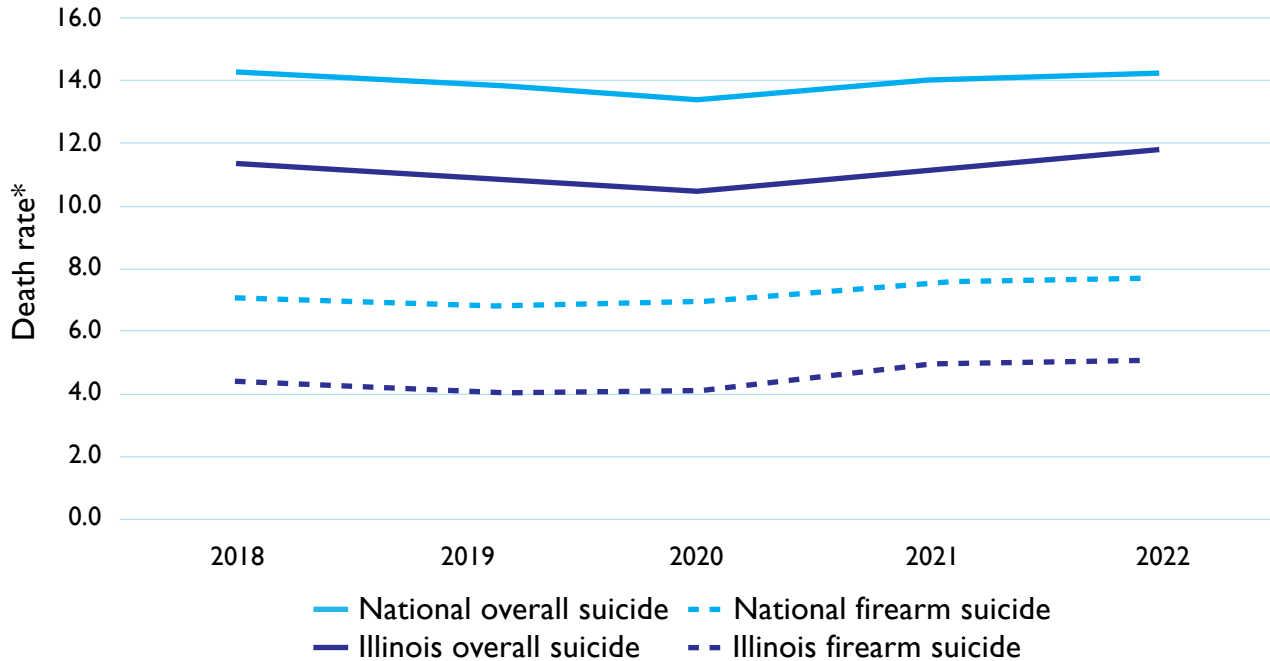
Table 6. Suicide deaths in Illinois, 2018 — 2022¹

| | Overall suicide count | Overall suicide rate* | Firearm suicide count | Firearm suicide rate* | Percentage of suicides that are firearm suicides |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 2018 | 1,488 | 11.3 | 573 | 4.2 | 38.5% |
| 2019 | 1,439 | 10.9 | 540 | 4.0 | 37.5% |
| 2020 | 1,362 | 10.4 | 543 | 4.0 | 39.9% |
| 2021 | 1,454 | 11.1 | 656 | 4.9 | 45.1% |
| 2022 | 1,533 | 11.7 | 676 | 5.0 | 44.1% |

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

Both the overall suicide rate and the rate of suicide by firearm are lower in Illinois compared to nationally, though both rates have increased in Illinois between 2020 and 2022 (Figure 6). The overall suicide rate in Illinois has remained relatively stable over the past few years, ranging from 11.3 per 100,000 in 2018 to 11.7 per 100,000 in 2022. The firearm suicide rate in Illinois has increased from 4.2 per 100,000 in 2018 to 5.0 per 100,000 in 2022. In comparison, the national suicide rate has also remained relatively stable with a rate of 14.2 per 100,000 in both 2018 and 2022, while the national firearm suicide rate has increased from 7.0 per 100,000 in 2018 to 7.6 per 100,000 in 2022.

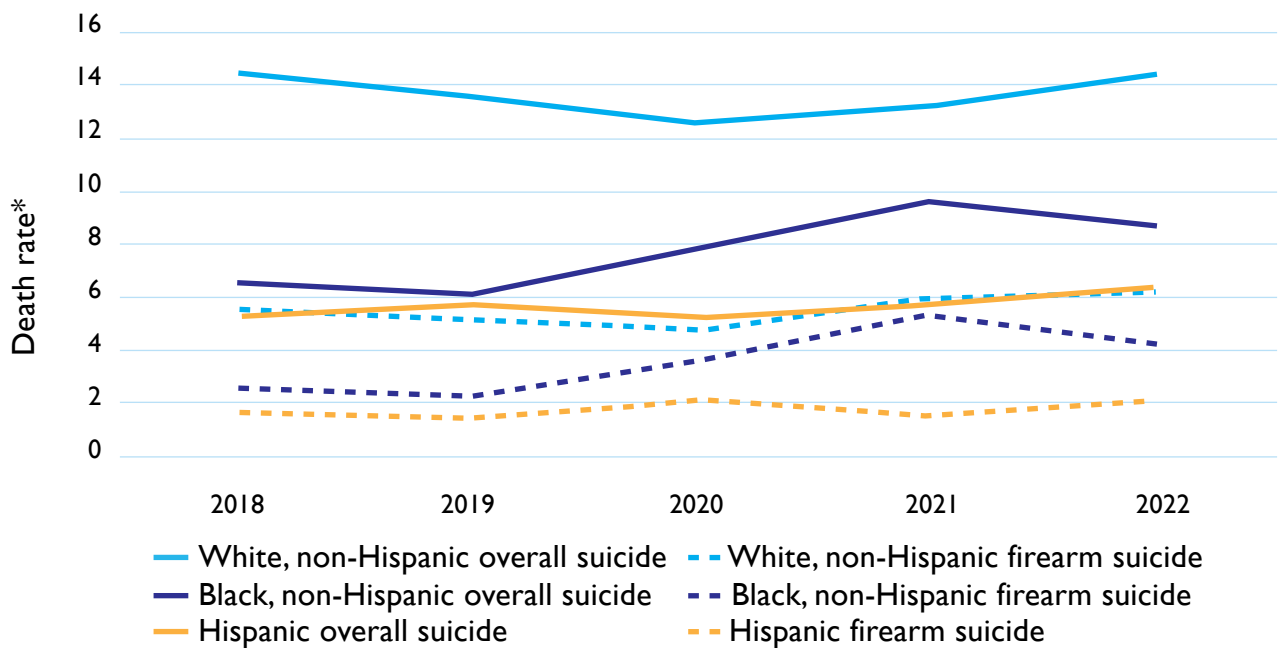
Figure 6. Overall and firearm suicide rates, 2018 — 2022¹



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

Overall suicide rates were highest among the white population in Illinois, as were firearm suicide rates (Figure 7). While firearm suicide rates decreased among Black Illinois residents between 2021 and 2022, rates increased slightly among both white and Hispanic residents.

Figure 7. Illinois' overall and firearm suicide rates by race, 2018 — 2022¹



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

Many more males died of suicide in Illinois in 2022 compared to females — 1,203 males compared to 330 females (Table 7). The white male suicide rate was higher than the Black male suicide rate (22.8 per 100,000 compared to 13.6 per 100,000), as was the firearm suicide rate (11.3 per 100,000 for white males compared to 7.5 per 100,000 for Black males). For white and Black males, firearms were the most common means employed. Similar to males, overall suicide rates were slightly higher among white females compared to Black females (6.6 per 100,000 compared to 4.3 per 100,000), as were firearm suicide rates (1.6 per 100,000 for white females and 1.1 per 100,000 for Black females).

Table 7. Overall and firearm suicide in Illinois by race and sex, 2022¹

| Male | Overall suicide count | Overall suicide rate* | Firearm suicide count | Firearm suicide rate* | Percentage of suicides that are firearm suicides |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Total deaths | 1,203 (100.0%) | 18.6 | 594 (100.0%) | 9.0 | 49.4% |
| Race and ethnicity | | | | | |
| American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian, non-Hispanic | 29 (2.4%) | 7.7 | -- | -- | -- |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 114 (9.5%) | 13.6 | 64 (10.8%) | 7.5 | 56.1% |
| White, non-Hispanic | 920 (76.5%) | 22.8 | 475 (80.0%) | 11.3 | 51.6% |
| More than one race, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 122 (10.1%) | 10.1 | 45 (7.6%) | 3.8 | 36.9% |

| Female | Overall suicide count | Overall suicide rate* | Firearm suicide count | Firearm suicide rate* | Percentage of suicides that are firearm suicides |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Total deaths | 330 (100.0%) | 5.2 | 82 (100.0%) | 1.2 | 24.8% |
| Race and ethnicity | | | | | |
| American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic | 0 (0.0%) | 0.0 | 0 (0.0%) | 0.0 | 0.0% |
| Asian, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | 0 (0.0%) | 0.0 | -- |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 38 (11.5%) | 4.3 | 11 (13.4%) | 1.1 | 28.9% |
| White, non-Hispanic | 251 (76.1%) | 6.6 | 65 (79.3%) | 1.6 | 25.9% |
| More than one race, non-Hispanic | -- | -- | 0 (0.0%) | 0.0 | -- |
| Hispanic | 30 (9.1%) | 2.5 | -- | -- | -- |

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

-- Indicates value has been suppressed because the number is too small to publish due to privacy concerns (nine or fewer deaths)

For all suicide deaths, 78.5 percent occurred among males. For firearm suicide deaths, 87.9 percent occurred among males (Table 8).

Table 8. Demographic characteristics of all suicides and firearm suicides in Illinois, 2022¹

| | All suicide deaths | Firearm suicide deaths |
|---|--------------------|------------------------|
| Total deaths | 1,533 (100.0%) | 676 (100.0%) |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 1,203 (78.5%) | 594 (87.9%) |
| Female | 330 (21.5%) | 82 (12.1%) |
| Age | | |
| < 10 | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| 10-24 | 205 (13.4%) | 85 (12.6%) |
| 25-44 | 537 (35.0%) | 195 (28.8%) |
| 45-64 | 514 (33.5%) | 214 (31.7%) |
| 65+ | 277 (18.1%) | 182 (26.9%) |
| Race and ethnicity | | |
| American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic | -- | -- |
| Asian, non-Hispanic | 34 (2.2%) | -- |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 152 (9.9%) | 75 (11.1%) |
| White, non-Hispanic | 1,171 (76.4%) | 540 (79.9%) |
| More than one race, non-Hispanic | 12 (0.8%) | -- |
| Hispanic | 152 (9.9%) | 50 (7.4%) |

-- Indicates value has been suppressed because the number is too small to publish due to privacy concerns (nine or fewer deaths)

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 There were less than 10 unintentional firearm deaths in Illinois in 2022. As a result, the death count has been suppressed for this year due to privacy concerns.

Illinois Gun Deaths Compared to Other Great Lakes States

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 9). In 2022, Illinois' overall homicide rate was 10.9 per 100,000, while Pennsylvania had the second-highest rate among Great Lakes states — 8.9 per 100,000. Illinois also had the highest firearm homicide rate, 9.2 per 100,000. Indiana had the second highest firearm homicide rate: 7.1 per 100,000. Among those age 24 and younger, Illinois had both the highest overall homicide rate (10.5 per 100,000) and highest firearm homicide rate (9.1 per 100,000). Ohio had the second highest rates in this category: 8.8 per 100,000 and 7.2 per 100,000 respectively.

Table 9. Homicide and firearm homicide rates among all ages and those age 24 and younger in the Great Lakes region, ranked by all ages homicide rate, 2022¹

| | All ages | | Age 24 and younger | |
|--------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Homicide rate* | Firearm homicide rate* | Homicide rate [§] | Firearm homicide rate [§] |
| Illinois | 10.9 | 9.2 | 10.5 | 9.1 |
| Pennsylvania | 8.9 | 7.0 | 8.4 | 7.1 |
| Michigan | 8.6 | 6.9 | 7.5 | 6.1 |
| Ohio | 8.5 | 6.8 | 8.8 | 7.2 |
| Indiana | 8.4 | 7.1 | 7.5 | 7.0 |
| Wisconsin | 6.0 | 5.1 | 5.9 | 4.7 |
| Minnesota | 3.8 | 2.7 | 3.6 | 2.7 |

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

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

Samuel “Mook” Mormon



Left to right: Samuel “Mook” Mormon (survivor and Founder of Impact Social Solutions), Yolanda Androzzo (Executive Director of One Aim Illinois), Revin Meadows (Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder of Books Over Balls), Eric Wilkins (survivor and Founder of Broken Wingz), and Venise Ewing (Chairperson of Fund Development Committee of NBW100, Chicago Metro Chapter)

Samuel “Mook” Mormon was shot in the back of the head while entering his house and was found lying near the fence by his wife shortly after. He survived. His interactions in rehabilitation and after he got out led him to his first job in the community violence intervention (CVI) space. During this time, Mook and a friend also started barbecuing in the neighborhood, helping keep kids and adults off the streets. From there on out, Mook’s life has been centered around community based violence intervention work with several different organizations throughout Chicago.

I had just returned from an out of town trip. I was on my front porch, opening my door and I didn’t actually hear the gunshot. I don’t even remember the fall. I was on the ground and I could feel my legs but I couldn’t make them move. Whatever the bullet hit, blocked the nerves to my legs. I tried to get up, but couldn’t.

At the time I was married, and my wife pulled up. I heard her scream. She asked me what happened and I said, ‘They hit me in the head with something.’ I didn’t know what they hit me with. When the paramedic rolled me over, she said, ‘Are you sure you don’t know what happened?’ And I said, ‘No, they just hit me in the head with something.’ And she responded, ‘No, they didn’t hit you in the head, they shot you.’

Right now, gun violence is touching everything. It puts a lot of fear into people. I’ve heard a lot of children say that they don’t want to be killed. A good portion of our community has become desensitized. That can add to gun violence, and it becomes an expected response.

One Aim is giving everybody a voice. Most people want to tell their story and want to get their story out there. It resonates with a person and we come together.

My message to those in the gun violence prevention space is to get some self care. You need that to keep going. Don’t think that you’re not helping someone. Don’t get to the point where you feel like it’s not working. It’s working. It’s minute by minute, hour by hour. They’re small wins but it’s working. If you can get close to somebody who wants to share with you, you’re headed in the right direction.

Crime Gun Trace Data

The prior edition of this report, using CDC data for 2021 and released in December 2023, contained 2022 Illinois crime gun trace data from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).^c Unfortunately, this data has not been updated by ATF since that study's publication, and is not expected to be released until the Fall of 2024. Key findings from the ATF data contained in the previous edition of this study (which can be accessed at <https://www.vpc.org/studies/IL2023.pdf>) included:

- 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.
- The state where the gun originated (“source state”) was identified in 15,353 traces. 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.
- 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.
- Where information about the age of possessors was available, one-third of possessors were age 24 or younger.
- Forty-four percent of firearms recovered in Illinois were recovered in Chicago.

More recently, in January 2024, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) released 2023 crime gun trace data for the city. That year Chicago police officers recovered 12,452 guns. CPD noted that this was the third consecutive year of more than 12,000 firearms taken off the streets by its officers. The total included the recovery of 1,230 assault weapons, an increase of nearly 15 percent compared to 2022.^d

^c See <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-illinois-2022>.

^d “Chicago Police Department: 2023 In Review,” Chicago Police Department, January 2, 2024, <https://home.chicagopolice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-in-Review.pdf>.

Conclusion

Firearms death remains an ongoing public health crisis in Illinois. Key findings presented in this report include high firearm homicide rates and increasing suicide rates in the state, as well as a continued 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.

Just as important as the data are the voices of those who have experienced gun violence firsthand. The stories of survivors as well as 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 across the nation.

The data and survivor stories presented in this report are crucial to illustrate the devastating impact of lethal 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.

The One Aim Illinois Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) Coalition, which includes more than 200 member organizations statewide, operates under a simple and meaningful goal: *to create a future where everyone is safe from gun violence by advocating for policies that protect vulnerable groups and prevent gun violence, aiming for a society where the threat of such violence is eliminated.* Towards this end, additional components of One Aim's community and coalition efforts include —

- *Voices of Change* (VOC): A campaign to shed light on the stories of individuals who have been profoundly impacted by gun violence and have emerged as advocates for a safer world.
- *One Aim Illinois Public Safety Task Force*: The One Aim Illinois Public Safety Task Force's purpose is to optimize implementation of firearm violence prevention laws through data analysis, coordinated strategy, and consistent monitoring of these laws in Illinois.

Looking ahead through the end of 2024 and beyond, the One Aim Illinois GVP Coalition is committed to advocating for policies that prioritize public safety, protect vulnerable populations, and prevent gun violence. The priorities reflect a holistic approach to addressing the root causes of gun violence and implementing effective solutions.

Key policy goals and initiatives include —

- Karina’s Bill to strengthen protections for survivors of domestic violence and ensure the removal of firearms from dangerous situations.
- Homicide Victims’ Families’ Rights Act to provide support and resources for families impacted by homicide.
- Homicide Data Transparency Bill to promote accountability and transparency in reporting on homicide incidents.
- Safe Firearm Storage Act to promote responsible firearm ownership and reduce the risk of gun-related tragedies.
- Lost and Stolen Firearm Reporting Bill to prevent unauthorized access to firearms and enhance public safety.
- Truth and Accuracy in Offense Titles to ensure accurate reporting and classification of gun-related incidents.
- Crime Victims Compensation Act to provide essential resources and support to communities affected by gun violence.
- ICJIA-GRANT - LIVEFREE IL Community Healing Resource Center Network.

By prioritizing these initiatives and working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders, the One Aim Illinois Gun Violence Prevention Coalition remains committed to building safer and more resilient communities across Illinois.

References

1. CDC WISQARS Fatal and Nonfatal Injury Reports. Accessed between May 6-8, 2024. Available at: <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/reports/>.
2. CDC WISQARS Explore Leading Causes of Death. Accessed on May 8, 2024. Available at: <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/lcd/?o=LCD&y1=2022&y2=2022&ct=10&cc=ALL&g=00&s=0&r=0&ry=0&e=0&ar=lcd1age&at=groups&ag=lcd1age&a1=0&a2=199>.

Appendix

The appendix contains the data for the figures in the report.

Figure 1. Rates of firearm deaths and motor vehicle deaths in Illinois, 2011 — 2022¹

| | All firearm deaths | Motor vehicle deaths |
|------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 2011 | 8.5 | 8.3 |
| 2012 | 9.0 | 8.5 |
| 2013 | 8.5 | 8.6 |
| 2014 | 9.0 | 8.1 |
| 2015 | 9.4 | 8.3 |
| 2016 | 11.6 | 9.0 |
| 2017 | 12.1 | 9.3 |
| 2018 | 10.8 | 9.1 |
| 2019 | 10.8 | 8.8 |
| 2020 | 13.8 | 10.0 |
| 2021 | 15.9 | 11.3 |
| 2022 | 14.4 | 10.4 |

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

Figure 2. Rates of firearm homicide and firearm suicide in Illinois, 2002 — 2022¹

| | Firearm homicide | Firearm suicide |
|------|------------------|-----------------|
| 2002 | 5.7 | 3.7 |
| 2003 | 5.4 | 3.2 |
| 2004 | 4.5 | 3.1 |
| 2005 | 4.5 | 3.4 |
| 2006 | 4.9 | 2.9 |
| 2007 | 4.5 | 3.3 |
| 2008 | 4.9 | 3.4 |
| 2009 | 4.9 | 3.1 |
| 2010 | 4.5 | 3.3 |
| 2011 | 4.8 | 3.4 |
| 2012 | 5.0 | 3.6 |
| 2013 | 4.5 | 3.6 |

| | Firearm homicide | Firearm suicide |
|------|------------------|-----------------|
| 2014 | 4.9 | 4.0 |
| 2015 | 5.5 | 3.7 |
| 2016 | 7.6 | 3.7 |
| 2017 | 7.5 | 4.3 |
| 2018 | 6.4 | 4.2 |
| 2019 | 6.6 | 4.0 |
| 2020 | 9.5 | 4.0 |
| 2021 | 10.6 | 4.9 |
| 2022 | 9.2 | 5.0 |

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

Figure 3. Homicide and firearm homicide rates, 2018-2022¹

| | Illinois overall homicide | Illinois firearm homicide | National overall homicide | National firearm homicide |
|------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2018 | 8.0 | 6.4 | 5.9 | 4.4 |
| 2019 | 8.0 | 6.6 | 6.0 | 4.6 |
| 2020 | 11.0 | 9.5 | 7.7 | 6.1 |
| 2021 | 12.2 | 10.6 | 8.1 | 6.6 |
| 2022 | 10.9 | 9.2 | 7.7 | 6.2 |

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

Figure 4. Illinois' homicide and firearm homicide rates by race, 2018-2022¹

| | Black, non-Hispanic overall homicide | Black, non-Hispanic firearm homicide | White, non-Hispanic overall homicide | White, non-Hispanic firearm homicide | Hispanic overall homicide | Hispanic firearm homicide |
|------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2018 | 38.9 | 33.5 | 1.7 | 0.9 | 5.1 | 3.7 |
| 2019 | 37.8 | 33.1 | 2.1 | 1.2 | 4.9 | 3.9 |
| 2020 | 55.4 | 50.0 | 1.7 | 0.9 | 7.4 | 6.4 |
| 2021 | 60.4 | 56.1 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 7.8 | 6.5 |
| 2022 | 52.4 | 47.2 | 2.3 | 1.2 | 8.2 | 6.6 |

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

Figure 5. Percentage of Illinois residents by race and ethnicity; Percentage of firearm homicide victims by race and ethnicity, 2022¹

| | Percentage of Illinois population | Percentage of firearm homicide deaths in Illinois |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| White, non-Hispanic | 72.8% | 7.4% |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 14.1% | 76.4% |
| Other races and Hispanic | 9.9% | 16.2% |

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

Figure 6. Overall and firearm suicide rates, 2018 — 2022¹

| | Illinois overall suicide | Illinois firearm suicide | National overall suicide | National firearm suicide |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2018 | 11.3 | 4.2 | 14.2 | 7.0 |
| 2019 | 10.9 | 4.0 | 13.9 | 6.8 |
| 2020 | 10.4 | 4.0 | 13.4 | 6.9 |
| 2021 | 11.1 | 4.9 | 14.0 | 7.5 |
| 2022 | 11.7 | 5.0 | 14.2 | 7.6 |

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

Figure 7. Illinois' overall and firearm suicide rates by race, 2018 — 2022¹

| | Black, non-Hispanic overall suicide | Black, non-Hispanic firearm suicide | White, non-Hispanic overall suicide | White, non-Hispanic firearm suicide | Hispanic overall suicide | Hispanic firearm suicide |
|------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2018 | 6.5 | 2.5 | 14.5 | 5.5 | 5.2 | 1.6 |
| 2019 | 6.1 | 2.3 | 13.7 | 5.2 | 5.7 | 1.4 |
| 2020 | 7.8 | 3.6 | 12.6 | 4.8 | 5.3 | 2.1 |
| 2021 | 9.6 | 5.3 | 13.3 | 6.0 | 5.8 | 1.5 |
| 2022 | 8.7 | 4.2 | 14.6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 2.2 |

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



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