

# Arrests in Cook County for Illegal Possession of a Firearm

---

EXAMINING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS IN ARRESTS  
FOR ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF A FIREARM WITHIN THE CONTEXT  
OF CRIMES INVOLVING GUNS

RESEARCH BRIEF

Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy, and Practice

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

DECEMBER 2020



## About the Report:

**Prepared by** David E. Olson, Ph.D., Don Stemen, Ph.D., Holly Michalak, MS, Sophia Juarez, MA, Cynthia Guzman, Amanda Ward, Ph.D. and Lisa Jacobs, J.D., Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology, and Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice

**Data Sources:** This research brief relied on data from the Illinois Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) maintained by the Illinois State Police and provided by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.<sup>1</sup>

**Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy & Practice**  
Loyola University Chicago  
25 East Pearson, Suite 1116  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
Phone: 312-915-7876  
ccj@luc.edu  
<https://www.luc.edu/ccj/>

The Center promotes fair, informed, effective, and ethical criminal justice approaches through collaborative interdisciplinary research, professional development and targeted projects.

This project was made possible through the support of the Joyce Foundation.

## INTRODUCTION

Gun violence is a serious threat to public safety nationally, and exacts an enormous toll on the state of Illinois, and particularly in Cook County. During 2018, more than 780 people in Illinois were murdered with a gun, and an additional 573 people in the state died by suicide with a firearm.<sup>2</sup> Of these statewide deaths involving firearms, 564 of the homicides and 165 of the suicides took place in Cook County.<sup>3</sup> More prevalent than fatal gun incidents are non-lethal, violent crimes committed with guns, such as robberies, assaults and batteries, and sexual assaults.

However, it is important to recognize that not all crimes in Cook County involving a firearm are offenses where a victim was threatened or shot at with a gun. Indeed, many gun crimes, such as the illegal possession of a gun, do not involve a violent action towards a victim. Under Illinois law, there are different categories of crimes involving a gun, which can be grouped into three broad categories: (1) the *use* of a gun in the commission of a violent crime (i.e., murder, robbery, assault/battery, criminal sexual assault), (2) the unlawful *discharge* of a firearm (i.e., shooting a gun under circumstances prohibited by law, such as in the direction of buildings or people), and (3) the illegal *possession* of a gun (i.e., the possession of a gun by persons prohibited from possessing guns due to their age, criminal record, or not having applied for/received a Firearm Owner's Identification/FOID card or a Concealed Carry License/CCL, or possessing a gun in prohibited places).<sup>4</sup>

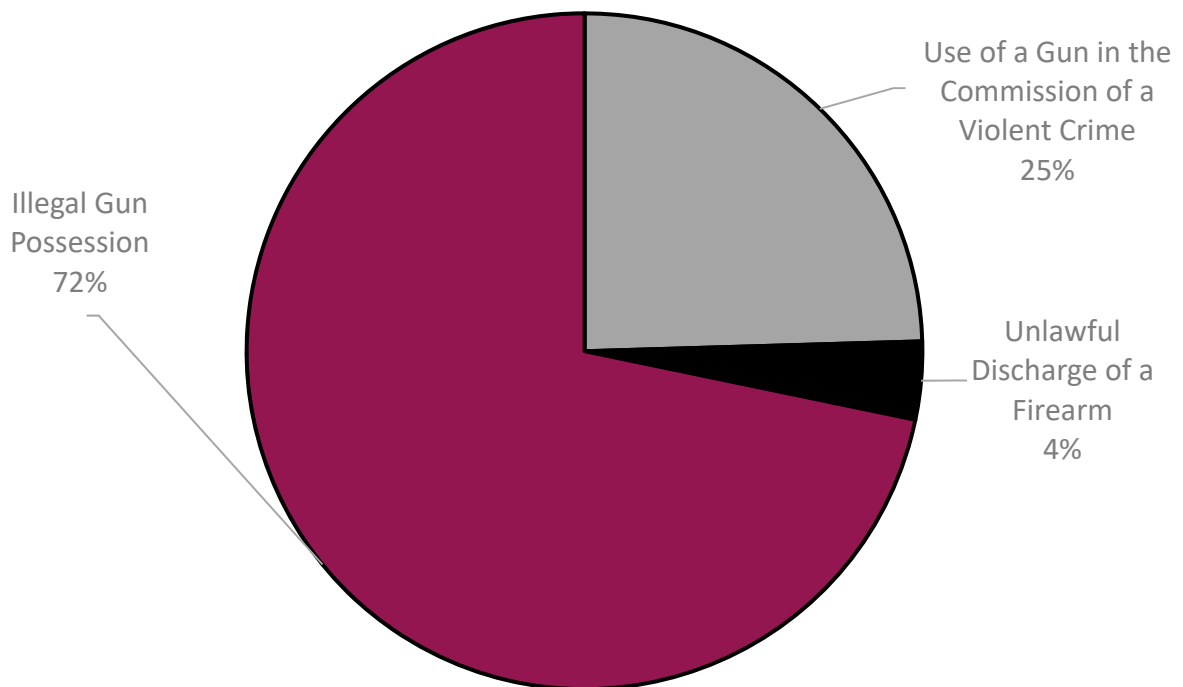
Illinois' legal terminology can create confusion regarding the prevalence of gun crimes involving violence. If someone possesses a gun when legally not allowed to do so, they can be arrested and charged with the crime of "unlawful use of a weapon" or "aggravated unlawful use of a weapon." The phrase "use of a weapon" can be misleading, because in most instances it is only defining the illegal *possession* of a firearm.

Using Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) data provided by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and the Illinois State Police, Loyola's Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice analyzed information on individuals arrested in Cook County for non-lethal crimes involving a gun (i.e., excluding murder). This research brief presents the first set of analyses from this effort, and provides a detailed description of the trends in arrests, and the characteristics of those arrested, for the crime of illegal possession of a gun.



Most people arrested in Cook County for a crime involving a gun are arrested for the illegal possession of a gun (Figure 1), not the use of a gun in the commission of a violent crime or the unlawful discharge of a firearm. Specifically, between state fiscal year (SFY) 2009 and 2019, there were just over 64,000 arrests involving roughly 50,000 unique individuals that explicitly included a gun offense among the arrest charges (Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> Because arrests for illegal gun possession account for such a large portion (72%) of the gun crime arrests in Cook County, a closer examination of these arrests and the characteristics of people arrested for these crimes is critical to fully understand the justice system’s response to crimes involving a gun.

Figure 1: Arrests for Gun Crimes in Cook County, SFY 2009 to 2019



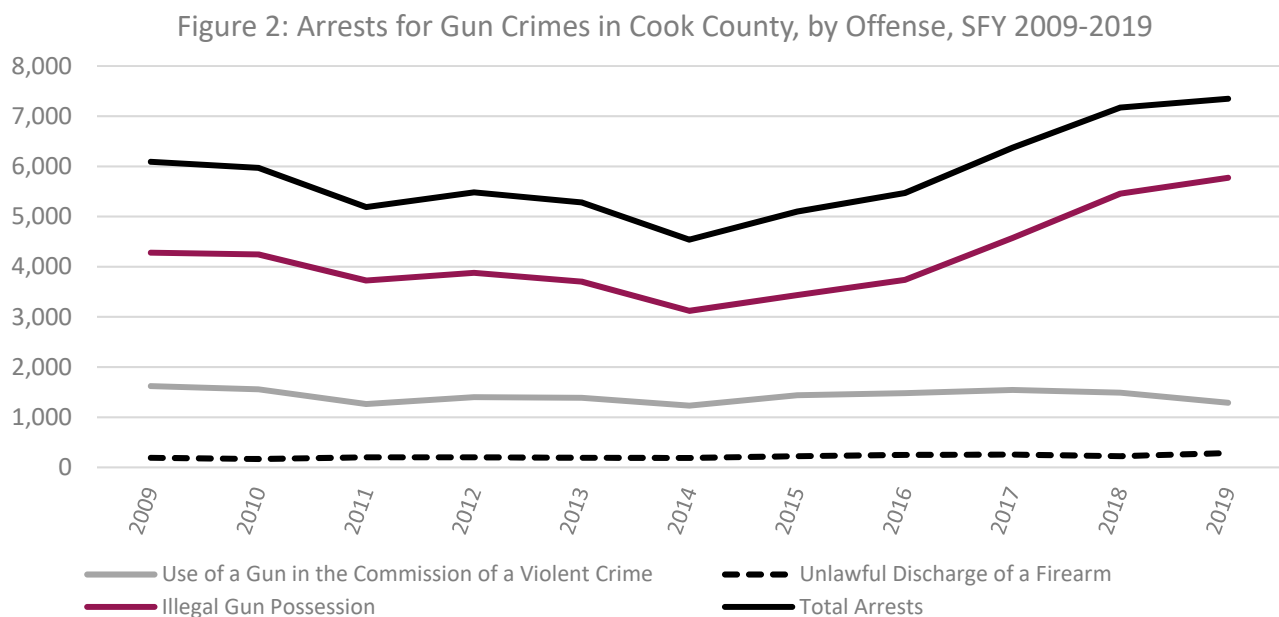
Source: Analyses by Loyola’s Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data provided by the Research and Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority



## ARREST TRENDS

Between 2014 and 2019, a dramatic increase in arrests for the illegal possession of a gun drove overall increases in gun arrests in Cook County.

Examining arrests for the three broad categories of crimes involving a gun (*use of a gun in the commission of a violent crime, unlawful discharge of a firearm, and illegal possession of a gun*), reveals a substantial increase in arrests for illegal possession of a gun starting in 2014. Between 2014 and 2019,<sup>6</sup> arrests for illegal possession of a gun (in which the defendant had no accompanying arrest charges of use of a gun in the commission of a violent crime or unlawful discharge of a firearm) increased 85%, from fewer than 3,200 to nearly 5,800 (Figure 2). Arrests for use of a gun in the commission of a violent crime increased 5% between 2014 and 2019, and accounted for one-quarter of gun arrests during this time period (Figure 1). Arrests for unlawful discharge of a firearm increased 53% during that same period, but accounted for only 4% of all gun arrests. Thus, while arrests increased across all three gun crime categories between 2014 and 2019, most of the overall increase in gun arrests was due to a dramatic increase in arrests for the illegal possession of a gun.



Source: Analyses by Loyola's Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data provided by the Research and Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

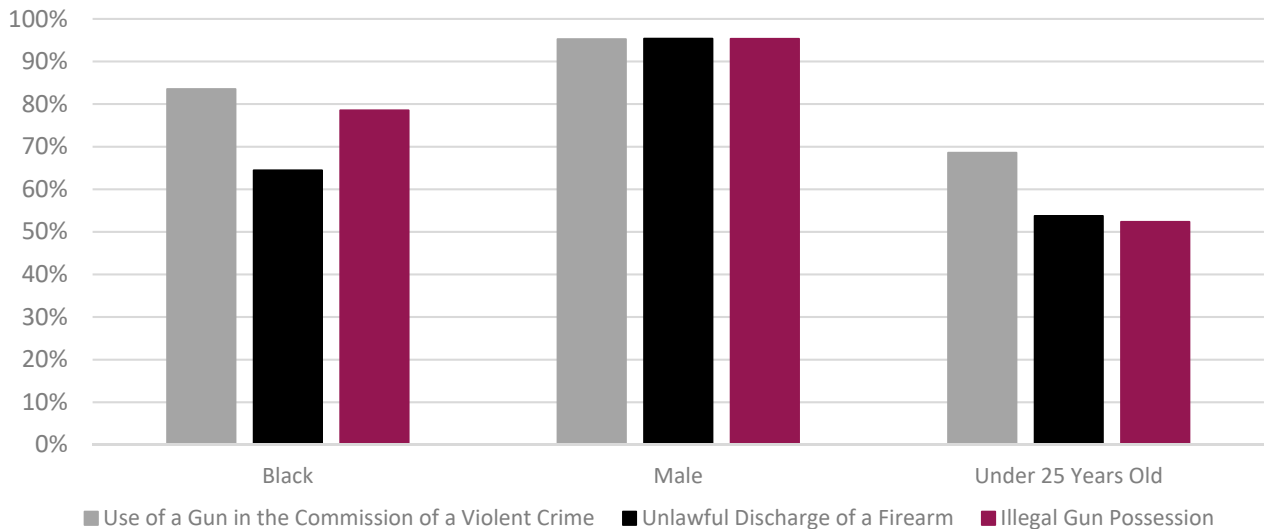


# PERSONS ARRESTED

The majority of people arrested for gun crimes in Cook County were Black, male, and under 25 years old.

Most of the people arrested for a gun crime during the time period examined were Black, male and under the age of 25 (Figure 3). This trend was consistent within all three categories of gun crimes (use of a gun in the commission of a violent crime, unlawful discharge of a firearm, and illegal possession of a gun). Among those arrested in Cook County specifically for the illegal possession of a gun (the most prevalent gun arrest as seen in Figure 1), 79% were Black, 95% were male, and 52% were under the age of 25. In general, those arrested for gun crimes in Cook County were more likely to be Black, male, and under 25 years old than people arrested in Illinois outside of Cook County. For example, among those arrested for illegal possession of a gun in Illinois outside of Cook County, 54% were Black, 92% were male, and 44% were under the age of 25.<sup>7</sup> A significant portion of arrests for gun crimes in Cook County (between 61% and 71%, depending on the type of gun crime) occurred in Chicago.

Figure 3: Demographic Characteristics of Persons Arrested for a Gun Crime in Cook County, by Offense, SFY 2009 to 2019

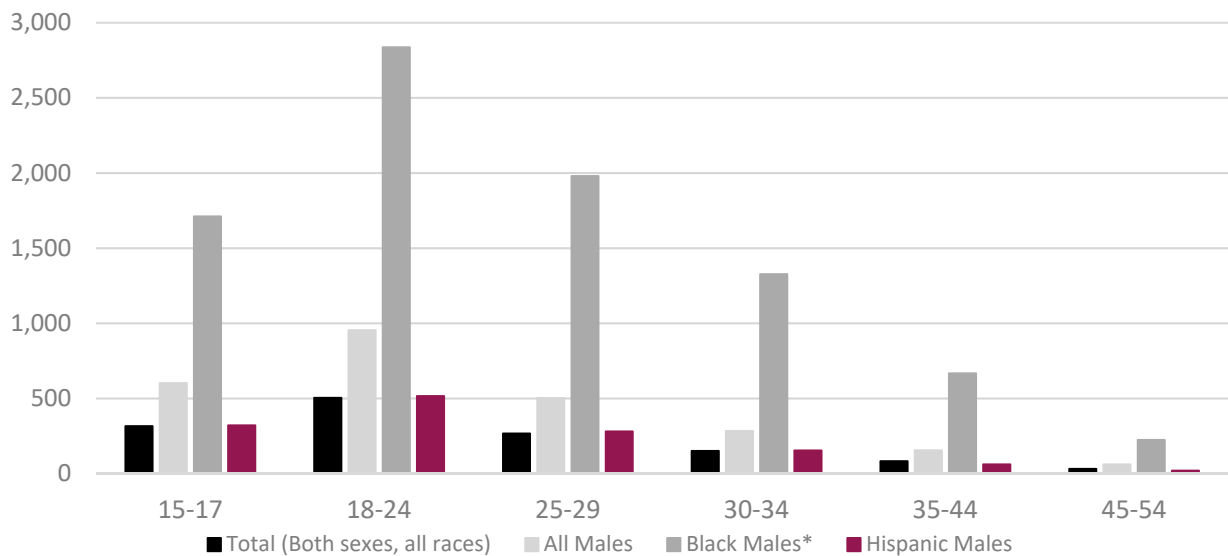


Source: Analyses by Loyola's Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data provided by the Research and Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority



In Cook County, males between the ages of 18 and 24 had the highest arrest rates for crimes involving a gun (Figure 4).<sup>8</sup> Black males between the ages of 18 and 24 had the highest arrest rate in Cook County; for every 100,000 Black males between the ages of 18 and 24, there were 2,837 arrests (Figure 4). By comparison, the arrest rate for White males (excluding Hispanic males) between the ages of 18 and 24 was 111 per 100,000 (not shown in figure), and 516 per 100,000 for Hispanic males between 18 and 24 years old in Cook County.

Figure 4: Annualized Arrest Rates per 100,000 for Gun Crimes in Cook County, 2016-2018



Source: Analyses by Loyola’s Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data generated and provided by Research Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority  
 \* Includes Hispanic Black males

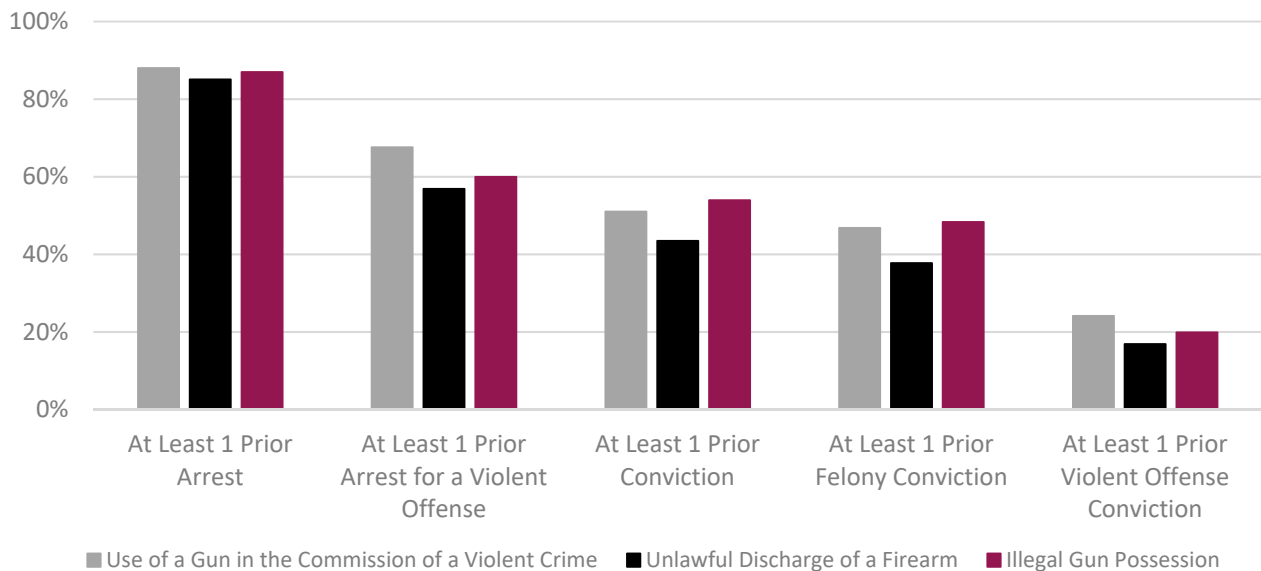
When analyzing the characteristics of those arrested for gun crimes, it is also important to consider the nature of their criminal history prior to the current gun arrest (Figure 5). One way to gauge the extent of a person’s prior criminal history is to examine the number and nature of prior *arrests*. Overall, most —more than 80%—of those arrested in Cook County for a gun crime between SFY 2009 and 2019 had at least one prior arrest, regardless of the type of gun crime. Depending on the specific type of gun crime, a smaller portion—between 57% and 68%—of those arrested had one or more prior arrests for a violent crime.<sup>9</sup> For example, of those arrested for the illegal possession of a gun between SFY 2009 and 2019, 87% had at least one prior arrest, and 60% had at least one prior arrest specifically for a violent crime. However, it must also be kept in mind that violent crimes often have low clearance rates (i.e., they do not result in the perpetrator being arrested).<sup>10</sup> The extent of prior arrest histories among people arrested in Cook County for gun crimes were generally more extensive than people arrested in Illinois outside of Cook County.<sup>11</sup>



Another way to consider an individual’s criminal history is to look at their prior *convictions*. Under Illinois law, prior *convictions* (not prior arrests) determine whether the seriousness of current charges may be elevated (e.g., classifying someone as an “armed habitual criminal” or a “felon in possession of a firearm”). Just over 50% of those arrested for the commission of a violent crime with a gun or illegal possession of a gun, and just under 50% of those arrested for illegal discharge of a gun, had a prior conviction for *any* crime. However, 24% or less of those arrested for the various gun crimes examined had a prior conviction specifically for a violent crime. Significantly, while most of those arrested for gun crimes had been previously *arrested*, a substantial portion had never been previously *convicted* of a crime, and the vast majority had never been convicted of a violent crime.

Thus, while those who are arrested for the illegal possession of a gun are often described as “violent gun offenders,” the legal criteria generally used to determine criminal history—prior conviction for a violent crime—suggests that most do not actually have a history of violence that has resulted in a conviction. People arrested in Cook County for gun crimes tended to have slightly less extensive histories of prior convictions for any crime, and specifically for violent crimes, than those arrested in Illinois outside of Cook County. On the other hand, those arrested in Cook County had slightly *higher* rates of prior convictions specifically for felony offenses.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 5: Criminal History of Persons Arrested for a Gun Crime in Cook County, by Offense, SFY 2009 to 2019



Source: Analyses by Loyola’s Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data generated and provided by Research Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority



# ARRESTS FOR ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF A GUN

---

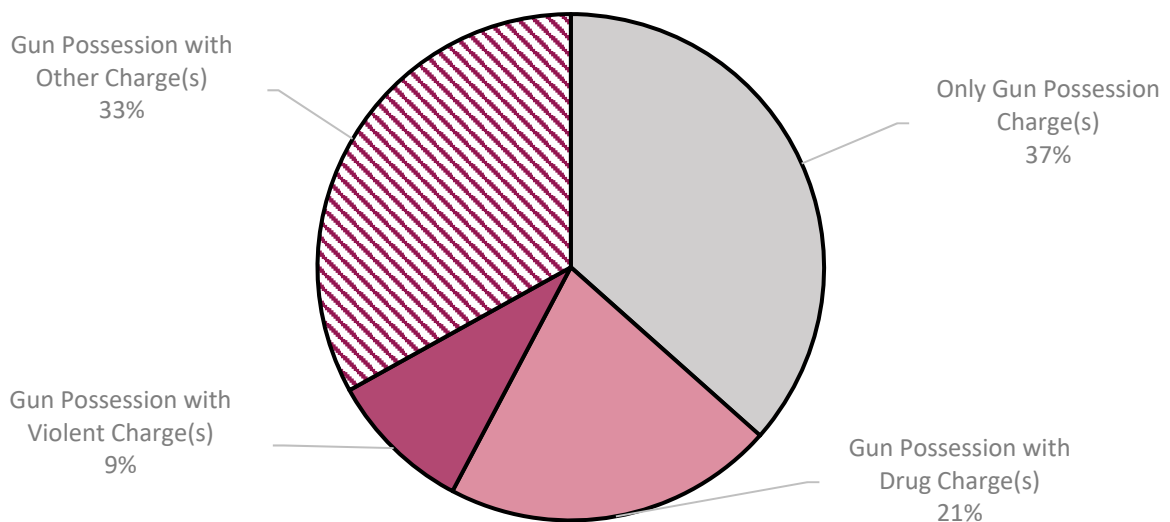
Most arrests for illegal possession of a gun included additional charges for non-violent crimes.

---

Because most gun arrests involve the illegal possession of a gun, more detailed and focused analyses of the nature and outcome of these arrests are critical to understanding how gun cases are handled by the justice system. Individuals are often arrested for multiple charges during a single arrest event. Based on the CHRI data used in this study, it is possible to look at both the illegal possession of a gun charges and additional non-gun charges for which individuals were arrested during the same arrest event.

Overall, 37% of arrest events in Cook County involving a charge of illegal gun possession did not include additional, non-gun charges (Figure 6), although this changed slightly over time (see Figure 9). Of all the arrests for illegal gun possession, a relatively small percent involved additional charges for violent crimes (9%), and none of these violent crimes included a charge of using a gun in the commission of a violent crime (i.e., they were not charged with committing a violent crime with a gun). Roughly 21% of illegal gun possession arrest events also included a charge related to a drug-law violation, and 33% included some other type of arrest charge. Overall, illegal gun possession arrest events in Cook County included an average of 2.73 total arrest *charges*. In general, these characteristics of the arrest events were similar to those seen in Illinois outside of Cook County.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 6: Arrests for Illegal Gun Possession in Cook County, Nature of Arrest Charges, SFY 2009 to 2019



Source: Analyses by Loyola's Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data generated and provided by Research Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority





As noted above, the majority (63%) of the arrest events in Cook County involving illegal possession of a gun involved some other charge, and of these other charges, 36% were for felony-level offenses. Thus, of all those arrested for illegal gun possession, 23% had an accompanying charge for a felony offense (i.e., 36% of the 63%). Under Illinois' Armed Violence statute (720 ILCS, 5/33 A-2), a person who illegally possesses a gun during the commission of any other felony can be charged and convicted of Armed Violence. In Illinois, Armed Violence is a Class X felony and requires a prison sentence of 6 to 30 years if convicted. Thus, Illinois law classifies the illegal possession of a gun during any felony, such as drug possession or delivery, theft, possession of a stolen car, etc., the same as violent crimes committed with a gun, such as armed robbery, aggravated criminal sexual assault, or aggravated battery with a firearm. Of those arrested for illegal gun possession with an accompanying felony-level offense (and thus eligible to be charged and convicted of Armed Violence), 89% of the accompanying felonies were non-violent offenses. Indeed, drug-law violations accounted for roughly one-quarter (24%) of these accompanying felony charges.

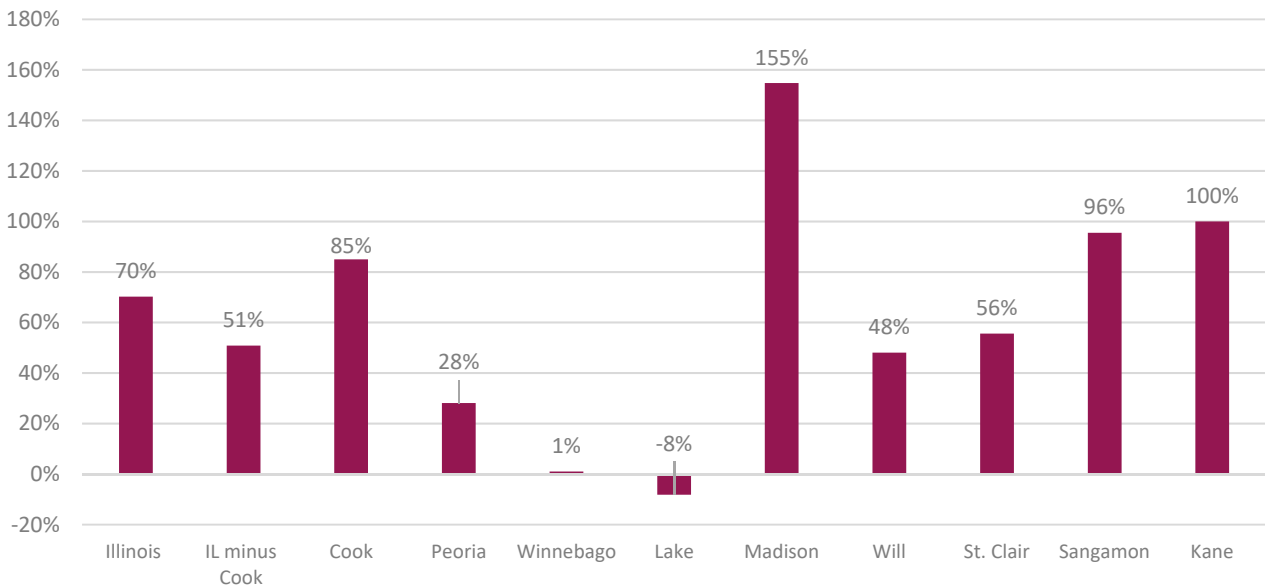


# CHANGES IN ILLEGAL GUN POSSESSION ARRESTS

Arrests for illegal possession of a gun increased 85% in Cook County between 2014 and 2019, more than most large counties in Illinois.

As seen in Figure 2, there was a dramatic (85%) increase in the number of arrests for the illegal possession of a gun between 2014 and 2019 in Cook County. Arrests increased 85% in both Chicago and suburban Cook County, although the majority (77%) of the arrests for illegal possession of a gun in Cook County occurred in Chicago. However, while Cook County accounted for the majority (61%) of gun possession arrests in Illinois and experienced a large increase in arrests for these offenses, Cook County was not the only county to see large increases. For example, in Madison, Sangamon and Kane Counties (in southern, central and northern Illinois, respectively) arrests for illegal possession of a gun increased more than 95%. In contrast, other counties saw relatively small or no changes in the number of arrests during this period. For example, arrests in Lake County fell 8% and in Winnebago County they were stable (increasing 1%).

Figure 7: Percent Change in Illegal Gun Possession Arrests, by County, SFY 2014 to 2019

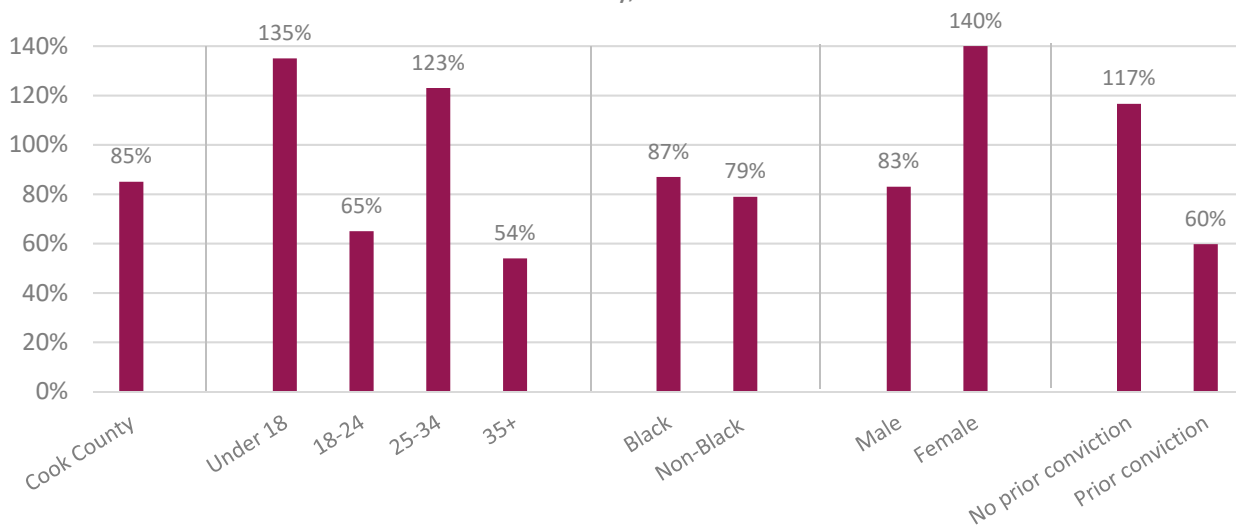


Source: Analyses by Loyola's Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data generated and provided by Research and Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority



Increases in arrests for illegal possession of a gun in Cook County also varied by the age and sex of the person arrested (Figure 8). While people under the age of 18, whose cases would usually be handled in juvenile court, accounted for just 9% of arrests between 2014 and 2019, the number of arrests for this age group more than doubled, increasing 135%. Similarly, arrests among people between 25 and 34—the age group that accounted for almost one-third (32%) of the arrests during this period—also doubled (increasing 123%). By comparison, there was a 65% increase in the number of arrests for people 18 to 24 years old between 2014 and 2019. People between the ages of 18 and 24 are often referred to as “emerging adults” because, despite having reached social and legal adulthood, research has shown that cognitively this age group still tends to exhibit immaturity when it comes to impulsivity and decision making.<sup>14</sup> Among people over the age of 34, there was a 54% increase in illegal gun possession arrests from 2014 to 2019. Finally, although females accounted for an extremely small portion (5%) of the people arrested for illegal gun possession, between 2014 and 2019 arrests of females increased 140%, compared to an 83% increase in arrests of males during that period (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percent Change in Gun Possession Arrests, by Arrestee Demographics in Cook County, 2014 to 2019



Source: Analyses by Loyola’s Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data generated and provided by Research and Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

As described earlier, Black individuals accounted for nearly 80% of all the people arrested for illegal gun possession during the study period (Figure 3), and their arrest rates relative to their representation in the population are also high (Figure 4). While there was an 85% overall increase in the number of people arrested for illegal gun possession between 2014 and 2019, the percent change in arrests for Black people was only slightly higher (87%) than arrests for all other racial categories combined (79%) (Figure 8). Prior to 2015, there was no ability in the State Police’s

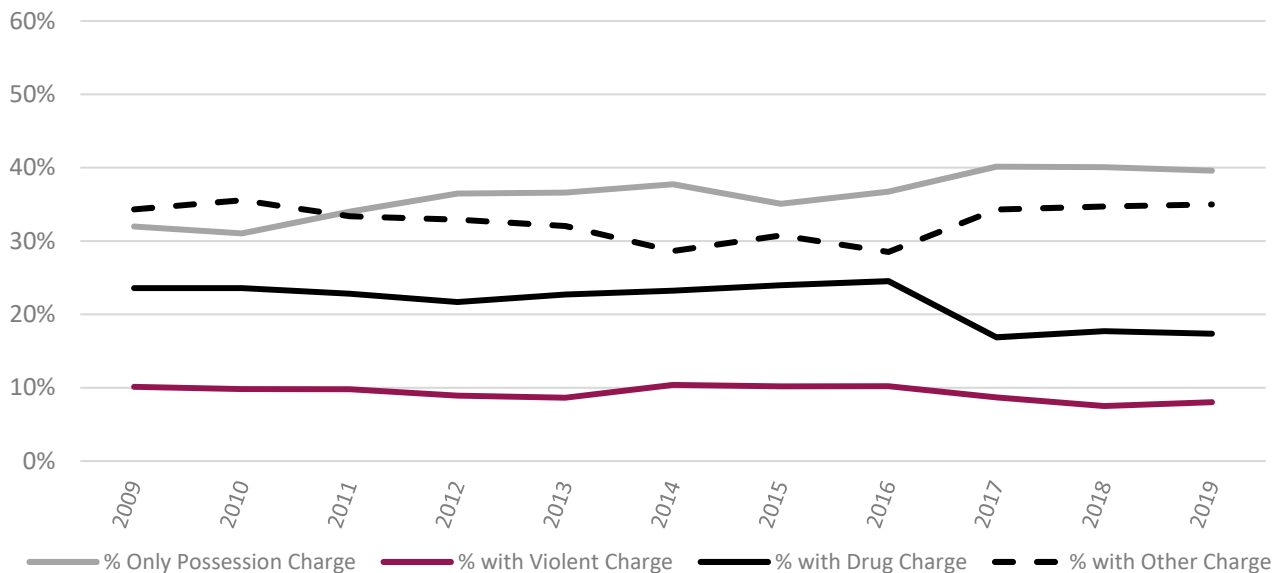


Criminal History Record Information, the source of data for this research, to indicate that the arrestee was Hispanic, and these arrests were primarily recorded as “White.” Between SFY 2016 and 2019, arrests of Hispanic individuals in Cook County increased 69%, compared to 54% for Black individuals and 18% for Whites. During the 2016 to 2019 time period, Hispanic individuals accounted for 15% of all arrests for illegal gun possession in Cook County.

A notable shift in the criminal histories of those arrested for illegal gun possession accompanied the increase in arrests for this offense (Figure 8). Between 2014 and 2019, arrests for illegal gun possession among those who had no prior convictions for any crime increased 117%, while arrests of those with a prior conviction also increased, but to a smaller degree (60%). As a result of this shift, 52% of those arrested in 2019 had no prior convictions, compared to 44% of those arrested in 2014.

Finally, an increasing proportion of the arrests for illegal possession of a gun involve only charge(s) for illegal gun possession. In SFY 2009, 32% of all arrests for illegal possession of a gun in Cook County involved only charges specific to illegal gun possession (Figure 9). However, by SFY 2019, this increased to 40%. Relatedly, a decreasing proportion of the arrests for illegal possession of a gun in Cook County involve an accompanying charge related to a drug-law violation. In SFY 2014, 23% of arrests also included at least one arrest charge for a drug-law violation, but by SFY 2019 this fell to 17%.

Figure 9: Arrests for Illegal Gun Possession in Cook County, by Nature of Arrest Charges, SFY 2009 to 2019



Source: Analyses by Loyola’s Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data provided by the Research and Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

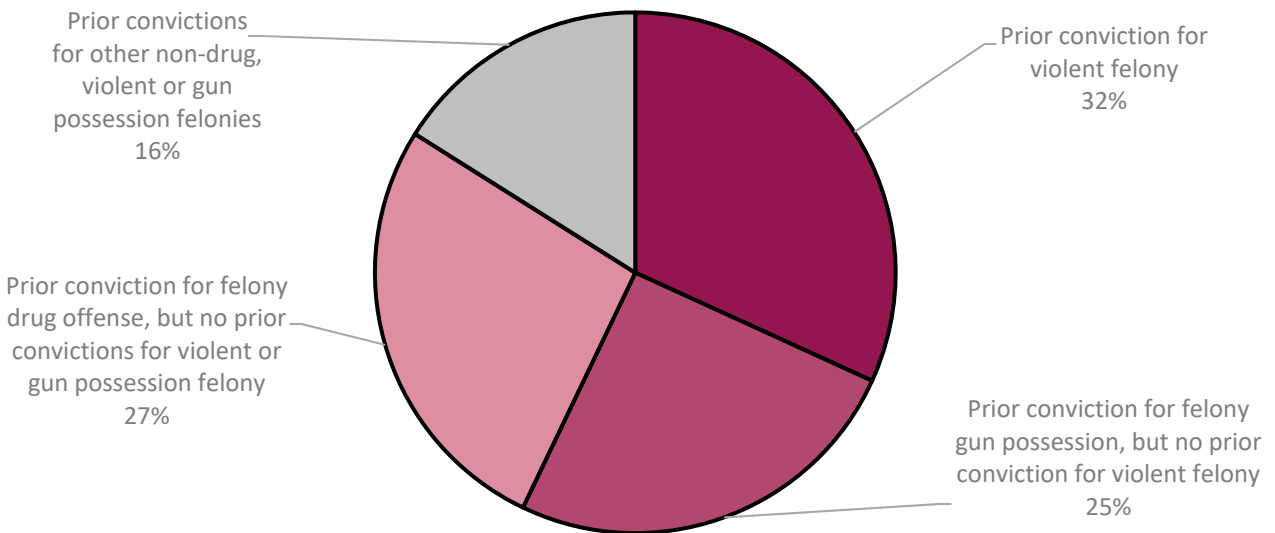


# VOLUME AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ARRESTS FOR SPECIFIC ILLEGAL GUN POSSESSION OFFENSES

Important subcategories of illegal gun possession arrests include “Felons in Possession of a Firearm,” “Armed Habitual Offender,” and “First Time Weapon Offender.”

**“Felons in Possession of a Firearm:”** Often when the public hears the term “Felon in Possession of a Firearm,” the assumption is that the individual has been convicted of a violent crime. However, Illinois law categorizes a broad range of non-violent offenses as felonies, including the illegal possession of drugs and most retail thefts. As seen previously in Figure 5, 48% of those arrested for illegal gun possession between SFY 2009 and 2019 had a prior felony conviction. Analysis of this sub-group indicates that most (68%) had no prior conviction for a felony violent crime (Figure 10). Disaggregating further, 25% had a prior felony conviction for illegal gun possession (but no prior violent felony offense) and 27% had a prior felony conviction for a drug-law violation (but no prior conviction for a felony gun possession or violent offense).

Figure 10: Nature of Prior Convictions Among Those With Felony Convictions Arrested for Illegal Possession of a Firearm in Cook County, SFY 2009 to 2019



Source: Analyses by Loyola’s Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data provided by the Research and Analysis Unit, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority



On average, 4.6 years had elapsed between the most recent prior felony conviction and the current arrest. Almost one out of every five (19%) of these arrestees had more than 7 years lapse since their most recent felony conviction. In addition, those arrested for illegal gun possession who had a prior felony conviction were slightly older (with an average age of 29 years) than people arrested for other illegal possession of gun offenses (with an average age of 27 years-old), the majority (84%) were Black males, and 80% of these Cook County arrests occurred in Chicago.

Not only is the possession of a firearm by a person with a prior felony conviction a violation of federal law, and as a result, potentially subject to federal prosecution,<sup>15</sup> but a conviction as a Felon in Possession of a Firearm also carries with it a substantial prison sentence under Illinois' state law. In Illinois, a person who is convicted as a Felon in Possession of a Firearm is guilty of a Class 2 Felony if the prior felony conviction includes illegal possession of a gun or a Class 3 Felony if the prior conviction does not include illegal possession of a gun. A Class 2 felony carries a prison sentence of at least 3 years, and up to 7 years, and a Class 3 felony carries a prison sentence of at least 2 years, and up to 5 years. Since 2006, a person convicted of a Class 2 Felon in Possession of a Firearm offense faces a mandatory prison sentence (i.e., the offense is non-probationable). Similarly, since 2012, a person convicted of a Class 3 Felon in Possession of a Firearm offense also faces a mandatory prison sentence.

**“Armed Habitual Criminal:”** The analyses also estimated the number of people arrested in Cook County for illegal possession of a gun who could potentially be charged under the “Armed Habitual Criminal” designation. Under Illinois law, anyone convicted of illegal possession of a gun who has two or more prior convictions for a forcible felony, illegal possession of a gun, or a Class 3 Felony or higher drug-law violation can be considered an Armed Habitual Criminal (720 ILCS 5/24-1.7). Conviction as an Armed Habitual Criminal requires a mandatory prison sentence of at least 6 years, and up to 30 years (i.e., a Class X felony in Illinois). Of those arrested for illegal possession of a gun between SFY 2009 and 2019, 13% potentially met the criteria to be considered an Armed Habitual Criminal.<sup>16</sup> These individuals tended to be older (with an average age of 32 years) than the rest of those arrested for illegal possession of a gun (with an average age of 27 years). Of that small portion (13%) who could potentially be considered an Armed Habitual Criminal, 61% only had prior convictions for drug-law violations or previous illegal possession of a gun offenses. In other words, more than one-half (61%) *did not have any prior convictions for a violent crime*.

**“First Time Weapon Offender:”** Finally, at the other end of the continuum are young adults arrested for illegal possession of a gun who have no prior convictions or adjudications for violent crimes. Effective January 1, 2018, a provision in Illinois law created a “First Time Weapon Offender Program” as a sentencing option (730 ILCS 5/5-6-3.6). Prior to this new diversionary option, any adult (18 or older at the time of the offense) convicted of the illegal possession of a loaded gun faced a mandatory prison sentence. Those now eligible for this diversion program would normally face a prison sentence of 1 to 3 years prior to this sentencing option. Adults between 18 and 20 accounted for roughly 21% of the adults arrested for illegal possession of a gun in Cook County



during the study period, and the vast majority (80%) of these 18 to 20 year olds arrested statutorily qualify for this program.

## CONCLUSIONS

The majority of people arrested in Cook County for gun crimes are arrested for the illegal possession of a gun. Despite the legal terminology used in Illinois to define these crimes—specifically, “unlawful use of a weapon” or “aggravated unlawful use of a weapon”— these offenses do not involve violence against victims. Further, while those arrested for the illegal possession of a gun are often cast as “violent gun offenders” by practitioners, elected officials, and the media, an examination of the criminal histories of those arrested shows that a substantial portion (40%) have no prior arrests for a violent crime, and the vast majority (80%) have no prior *convictions* for a violent crime. Further, among the sub-group arrested for illegal gun possession that have prior felony convictions (i.e., “felons in possession of a firearm”), 68% have no prior convictions for a violent felony offense.

Empirically, it is extremely difficult to determine whether those arrested for illegal possession of a gun are actually responsible for violent crimes committed with a gun because the clearance rate for violent crimes committed with a gun is so low. Often the assumption is that if someone illegally possesses a gun, lives in an area with high crime rates, and has previously been arrested, their motivation for possessing a gun is criminal. However, many of those who illegally possess guns do so for the same reasons as those who legally own and carry guns in Illinois: self-protection. For example, a survey by the Urban Institute of young people (aged 18 to 26) living in Chicago neighborhoods most impacted by violence found that one-third had illegally carried a firearm at some point in their lives, and among males, it was 50%. Almost all of those who reported having carried a firearm reported that self-protection was the primary reason, and those who had been previously victimized were even more likely to report carrying a gun for self-protection.<sup>17</sup>

While efforts such as the passage of the First Time Weapon Offender Program have sought to recognize the nuance and sub-populations of those arrested for “unlawful use of a weapon,” the population *eligible* for this diversion program is relatively small, accounting for less than 19% of all of those arrested in Cook County for illegal gun possession. We do not currently know the extent to which this sentencing option is being utilized in Cook County. However, if diverting individuals aged 18-20 away from mandatory prison sentences and into services results in better outcomes, then policy-makers should consider expanding the age eligibility for this program. Doing so would be warranted, given the age-specific arrests rates for illegal gun possession continues to peak into the mid-20's and a substantial portion of these individuals have no prior convictions for any crime.



---

<sup>1</sup> Data from the Illinois State Police’s Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) system were extracted by the Research and Analysis Unit of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority in October of 2019 for all arrests that occurred in Illinois between January 1, 2008 through June 30, 2019 where at least one of the arrest charges involved a gun crime. In addition to the arrest event that resulted in the case being included in the study period, detailed information on *all* arrests for those individuals was also provided, along with information on court filings, court dispositions and court sentences.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) Fatal Injury data.

<sup>3</sup> The number of homicides with gun and suicides with a firearm that took place in Cook County came from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER Online Database for Mortality-- <https://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See 720 ILCS 5/24-1 for details of Illinois’ unlawful use of a weapon (“UUW”) statute. A CCL requires the applicant be at least 21 years old, register with and submit their fingerprints to the Illinois State Police, pay a \$150 application fee every five years, and complete a 16 hour course by a certified instructor, which cost between \$150 and \$200. On December 31, 2019, there were approximately 100,200 active CCL cards in Cook County, or a little less than 3% of Cook County’s 21 and older population.

<sup>5</sup> Illinois’ state fiscal years (SFY) cover the period from July 1 through June 30, thus data for SFY 2009 covers the period from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2019. When an individual is arrested, they are often charged with multiple crimes. Our analyses included all individuals arrested during the study period for whom at least one arrest offense involved a gun.

<sup>6</sup> Analyses used data aggregated at the state fiscal year.

<sup>7</sup> Among those arrested for a violent crime committed with a gun in Cook County, 84% were Black, 95% were male, and 69% were under 25. Outside of Cook County among those arrested for a violent crime with a gun, 66% were Black, 93% were male, and 57% were under 25. Among those arrested in Cook County for illegal discharge of a firearm, 64% were Black, 95% were male, and 54% were under 25. Among those arrested in Illinois outside of Cook County for illegal discharge of a firearm, 54% were Black, 94% were male, and 51% were under 25 years old.

<sup>8</sup> The age-race-and sex-specific arrests rates included in this graph are only for the most recent three calendar year period (2016 to 2018), and are only counting unique individuals arrested so as not to inflate the rate of arrests per person within that population group. Three years of data were combined so as to minimize the influence on a specific year with low or high arrests, and this three year total of arrests were divided by three to create an annualized rate.

<sup>9</sup> Violent crimes included all felony and misdemeanor offenses of assault, battery, robbery, sexual assault/sexual abuse, home invasion, vehicular highjacking, domestic battery, and homicide. Violent crimes did not include an arrest for illegal gun possession.

<sup>10</sup> In 2018, it is estimated that only 23% of robberies, and 32% of aggravated assaults committed with a firearm are “cleared” (i.e., result in an arrest) nationally (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018: Crime in the U.S., Table 27). Based on analyses of Chicago Police Department data available through the City’s data portal, the clearance rate in Chicago for these offenses is even lower.

<sup>11</sup> There was a 2 to 6 percentage point difference in the percent of people arrested for any crime between those arrested in Cook County versus Illinois outside of Cook County, depending on the type of gun crime. For example, 87% of people arrested in Cook County for illegal gun possession had a prior arrest for any crime, compared to 81% of those arrested outside of Cook County. In terms of the prevalence of prior arrests for violent crimes, there was a slightly larger difference—an 8 to 12 percentage point difference, depending on the gun crime type--between those arrested in Cook County versus the rest of Illinois. For example, 60% of people arrested in Cook County for illegal gun possession had a prior arrest specifically for a violent crime, compared to 48% of those arrested outside of Cook County.

<sup>12</sup> There was a 2 to 8 percentage point difference in the percent of people previously convicted for any crime between those arrested in Cook County versus Illinois outside of Cook County, depending on the gun crime type. For example, 54% of people arrested in Cook County for illegal gun possession had a prior conviction for any crime, compared to 56% of those arrested outside of Cook County. In terms of the prevalence of prior convictions for violent crimes, there was a slightly smaller difference—a 2 to 3 percentage point difference, depending on the gun crime type--between those arrested in Cook County versus the rest of Illinois. For example, 20% of people arrested in Cook County for illegal gun possession had a prior conviction specifically for a violent crime, compared to 22% of those arrested outside of Cook County. Finally, there was a 0.2 to 5 percentage point difference in the percent of people previously convicted for a felony between those arrested in Cook County versus Illinois outside of Cook County, depending on the gun crime type.





---

For example, 48% of people arrested in Cook County for illegal gun possession had a prior conviction for a felony, compared to 43% of those arrested outside of Cook County.

<sup>13</sup> Among the illegal gun possession arrests in Illinois outside of Cook County, 38% of the arrest events involved only charges of illegal gun possession (compared to 37% in Cook County), 23% of the arrest events included a charge related to a drug-law violation (compared to 21% in Cook County), 13% involved an additional charge for violent crime (compared to 9% in Cook County), and 26% included some other type of arrest charge (compared to 33% in Cook County). Overall, illegal gun possession arrest events in Illinois outside of Cook County included an average of 2.8 total arrest charges, similar to Cook County's average of 2.7 total arrest charges.

<sup>14</sup> Loeber, R., & Farrington, D. 2012. *From juvenile delinquency to adult crime: Criminal careers, justice policy, and prevention*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>15</sup> Although a federal offense, a felon in possession of a firearm is rarely prosecuted federally and is usually left to state and local prosecutors to handle. For example, in 2018 there were a total of 6,719 federal convictions for a felon in possession of a firearm *across the entire U.S.* (see [https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/quick-facts/Felon\\_In\\_Possession\\_FY18.pdf](https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/quick-facts/Felon_In_Possession_FY18.pdf)), compared to more than 1,300 convictions for this offense in state courts in Illinois alone based on analyses by Loyola's Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice of CHRI data provided by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

<sup>16</sup> Being "potentially considered" an Armed Habitual Criminal was based on analyses of the person's criminal history using the CHRI data to determine if they had the requisite convictions specified in the Armed Habitual Criminal law.

<sup>17</sup> Fontaine, La Vigne, Leitson, Erondy, Okeke, and Dwivedi (2018): *We Carry Guns to Stay Safe*: Perspectives on Guns and Gun Violence from Young Adults Living in Chicago's West and South Sides. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved from: [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99091/we\\_carry\\_guns\\_to\\_stay\\_safe\\_1.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99091/we_carry_guns_to_stay_safe_1.pdf)

