SALEM VIOLENCE PROBLEM ANALYSIS: 2018 - 2023

SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

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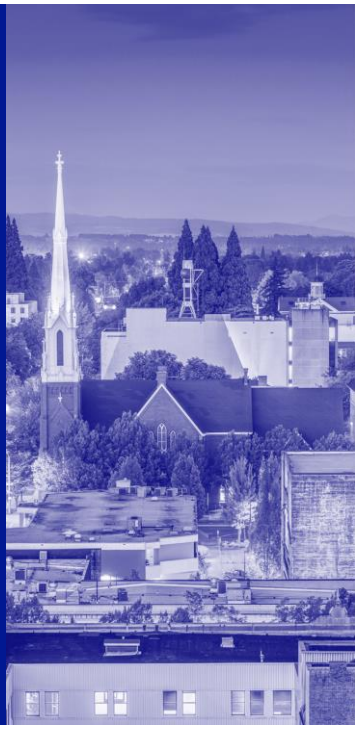
INTRODUCTION



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Introduction

- Consistent with trends in many cities throughout the U.S., the City of Salem has experienced shifting violence dynamics over the past two years.
- This has occurred alongside growing community concerns regarding disorder issues, homelessness, and perceived increases in juvenile involvement in serious crime.
- In addition to these increases in gun violence, partners in the City of Salem and Marion County highlighted several notable events that may impact violence and violence reduction efforts citywide, though the impacts of each of these events is unknown.

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Introduction

- In May 2023, the Salem Police Department partnered with researchers to conduct a detailed analysis of local gun violence.
- A ”problem analysis” is a set of analysis exercises designed to support the implementation of violence reduction strategies. This methodology has been developed over the last 25 years and used in dozens of cities nationally.
- This analysis establishes a common understanding of the local violence problem that guides and informs the work of civic, community, and criminal justice leaders to reduce violence.
- The problem analysis identifies the networks and individuals within a community who are at greatest risk of violence and helps tailor an intervention to reduce that risk.
- Though the methodology is informed by research, the problem analysis is primarily a practice document with implications for local policy.

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Introduction

- This analysis examined all homicides and nonfatal injury shooting incidents in the City of Salem from January 2018 – June 2023 (excluding cases of justified self-defense, confirmed self-inflictions, and officer-involved shootings).
- This period included 86 incidents involving 102 victims. The 18 homicides involved 36 unique victims or identified suspects, and the 68 nonfatal shootings involved 114 unique identified victims or suspects.
- Note that trend data counts homicides and nonfatal shootings at the individual level (i.e., number of victims) while the violence analysis counts homicides and nonfatal shootings at the incident level (i.e., number of events).
- This analysis examines the characteristics of these incidents and the involved individuals, including demographics and criminal justice system involvement. We also examine groups/gangs and social networks at high risk of involvement in violence, including their sizes and relationships, and the spatial concentration of violence throughout the city.

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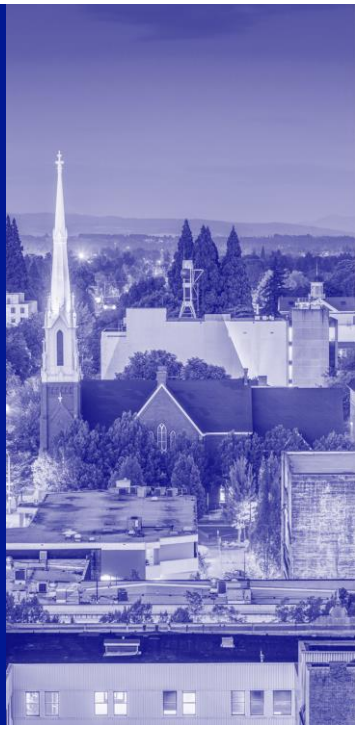
CONTEXT & TREND DATA



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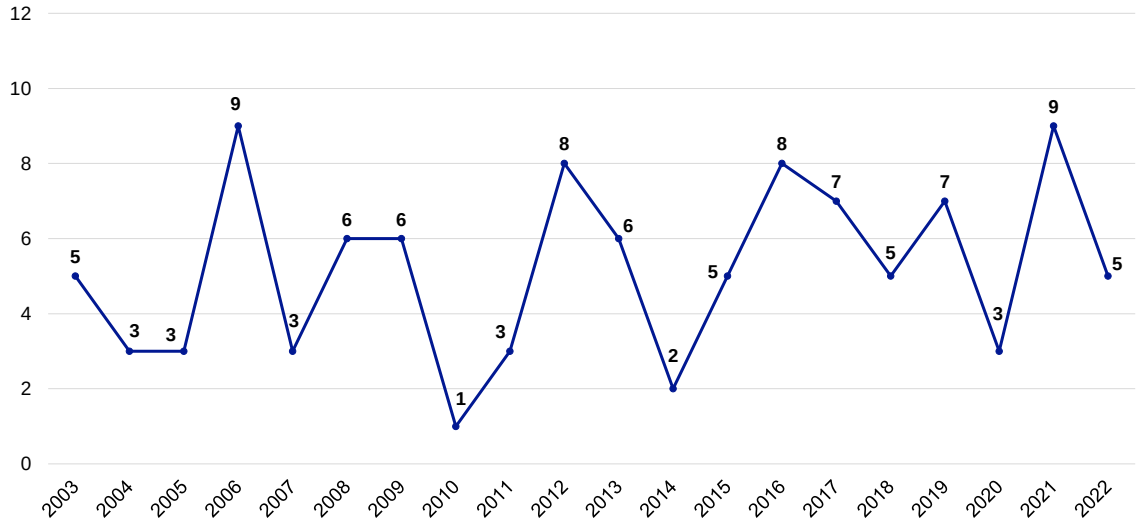
Salem Homicides: 2003 - 2022



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2012-2020; SPD Internal Data for 2021-22

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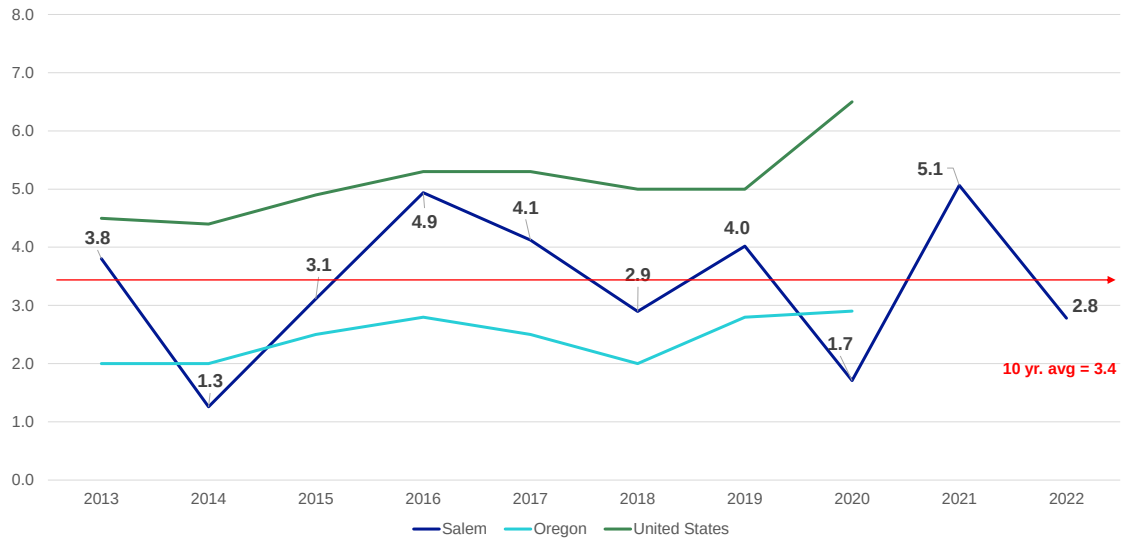
Salem Homicide Rate (per 100,000 population): 2013 - 2022



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2012-2020; SPD Internal Data for 2021-22

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Salem Homicide Rate (per 100,000 population): Peer Comparison Cities

	2019 Homicide Rate (per 100,000 pop.)	Population	Population Density (per sq. mi)	Median Household Income	Unemployment Rate	Percent Below Poverty Line
Salem, OR	**4.0**	**177,723**	**3,597**	**$62,185**	**6.4**	**14.7**
Albuquerque, NM	14.4	562,599	3,015	$56,366	5.6	16.2
Eugene, OR	1.2	177,239	3,998	$55,776	7.4	19.6
Fort Wayne, IN	10.0	265,974	2,383	$53,978	6.0	15.5
Lincoln, NE	1.7	292,657	2,980	$62,566	3.4	13.0
Wichita, KS	9.0	395,699	2,454	$56,374	5.9	15.2

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS
Peer cities generated through use of the "Peer City Identification Tool," Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago

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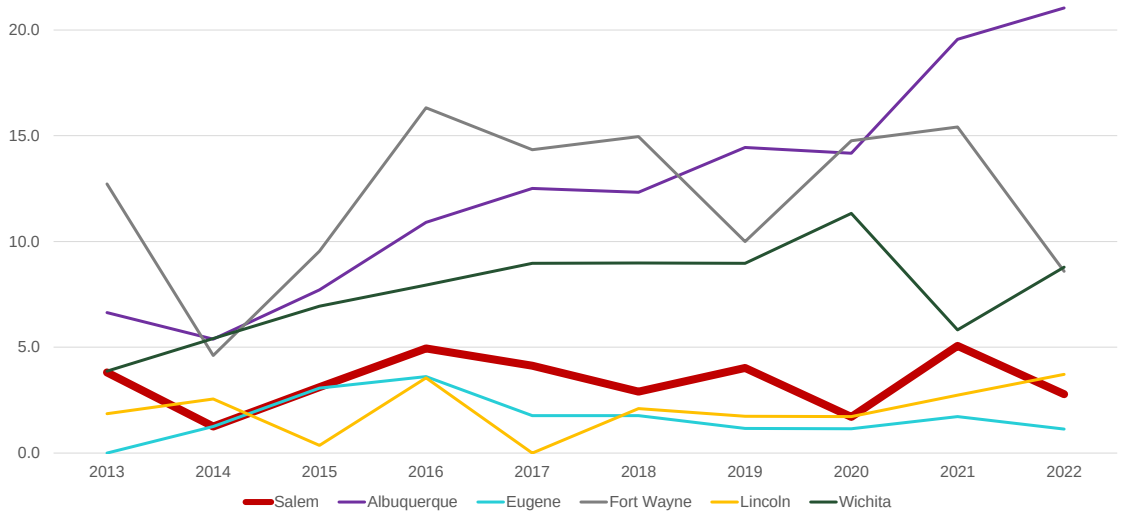
Salem Homicide Rate (per 100,000 population): 2013 – 2022 with Peer Comparison Cities



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2012-2021; SPD Internal Data for 2022; Preliminary publicly available data sourced for peer cities in 2022

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Salem Homicide Rate (per 100,000 population): Oregon Comparison Cities

	2019 Homicide Rate (per 100,000 pop.)	Population	Population Density (per sq. mi)	Median Household Income	Unemployment Rate	Percent Below Poverty Line
Salem, OR	**4.0**	**177,723**	**3,597**	**$62,185**	**6.4**	**14.7**
Eugene, OR	1.2	177,239	3,998	$55,776	7.4	19.6
Gresham, OR	2.7	111,621	4,868	$61,826	6.2	15.1
Medford, OR	1.2	85,556	3,315	$57,424	5.5	14.6
Bend, OR	0.0	103,254	2,950	$74,253	4.0%	10.0

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS
OR comparison cities selected with U.S. Census data

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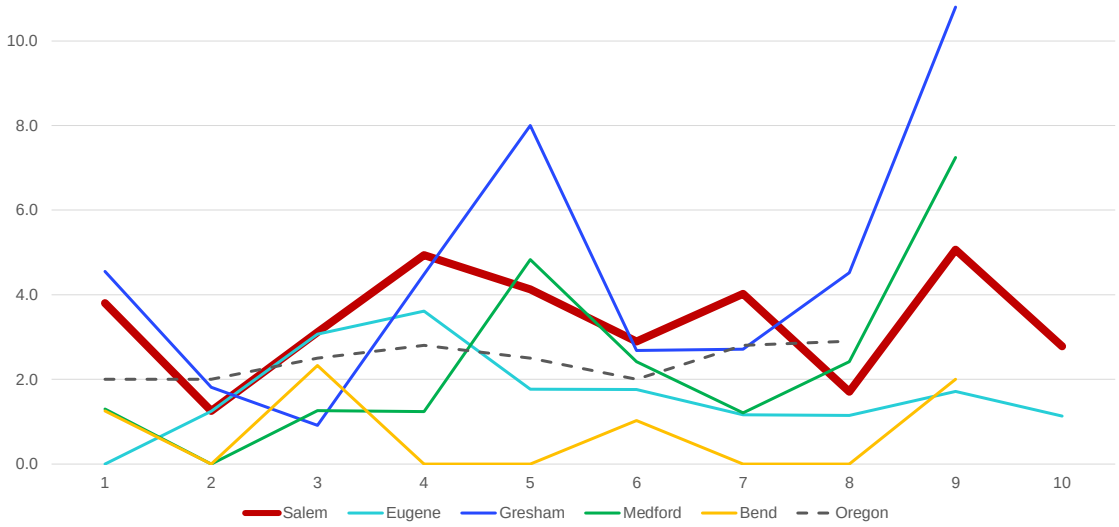
Salem Homicide Rate (per 100,000 population): 2013 – 2022 with Oregon Comparison Cities



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2012-2021; SPD Internal Data for 2022; Preliminary publicly available data sourced for comparison cities in 2022 when available

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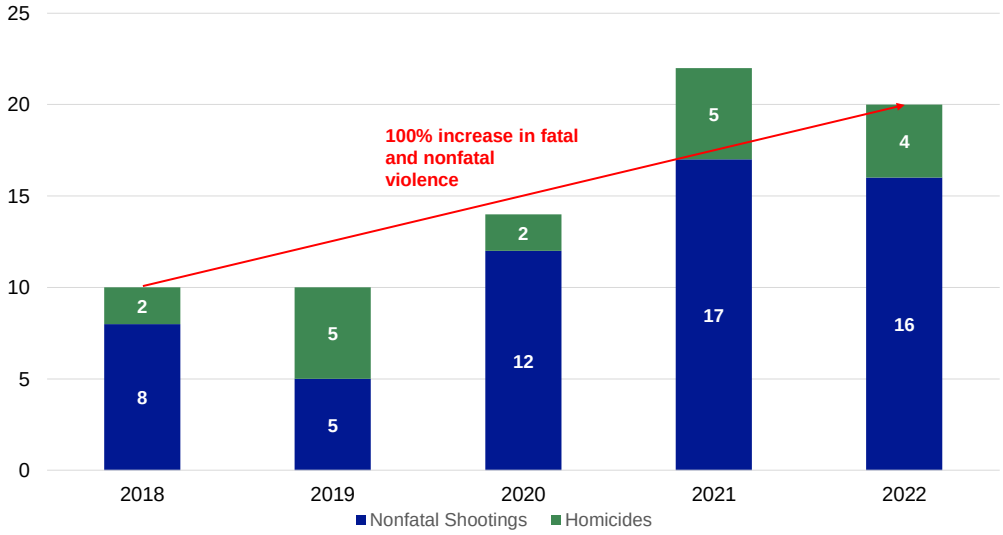
Salem Homicides & Nonfatal Shootings: 2018 - 2022



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Summary

- Salem's average 10-year homicide rate is 3.4 per 100,000 population.
  - This is below the average homicide rate, but it is often about 1-2 times greater than Oregon's average statewide homicide rate.
  - Relative to selected comparable Oregon cities, Salem's homicide rate has consistently been among the highest over the past ten years.
- U.S. cities experienced about an average 30% increase in homicides in 2020 compared to 2019 and nationwide, homicides continued to increase an average additional 5% in 2021.*
- Like many U.S. cities, Salem did experience an increase in gun violence in recent years.
  - When fatal and nonfatal shootings are combined, the city experienced a 100 percent increase in gun violence incidents over five years (2018 – 2022).

*Rosenfeld, R. & Lopez, E. (2022). Pandemic, social unrest, and crime in U.S. cities: 2021 year-end update. Washington, DC: Council on Criminal Justice.

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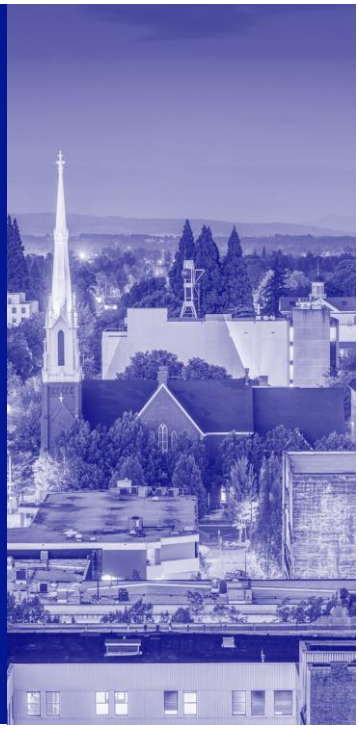
VIOLENCE ANALYSIS



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Introduction

- Gun violence characterizes the overwhelming majority of community violence, and extant research demonstrates that fatal and nonfatal shootings are remarkably similar in terms of the people and circumstances involved.
- The following gun violence analysis examines all gun homicides and nonfatal shootings occurring between January 1, 2018 – June 30, 2023.
  - These 86 incidents include 18 gun homicides and 68 nonfatal shootings.
- This section analyzes data on victim/suspect demographics, victim/suspect criminal history, and incident circumstances for fatal and nonfatal shootings.

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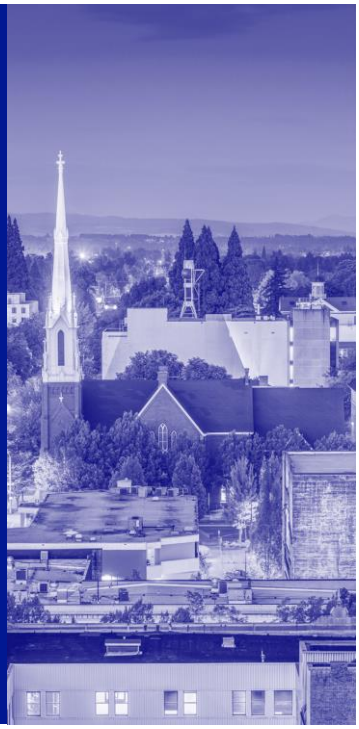
VIOLENCE ANALYSIS

Victim and Suspect Demographics



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Victims & Suspects: Sex and Race

	FATAL & NONFATAL SHOOTINGS (N=86)			SALEM POPULATION
	Victims (n=94)	Suspects (n=56)	Victims & Suspects (n=150)	
Sex				
Male	**84.0%**	**92.9%**	**87.3%**	**51.0%**
Female	16.0%	7.1%	12.7%	**49.0%**
Race				
Black	**12.7%**	**5.4%**	**10.0%**	**1.4%**
Hispanic	**45.7%**	**58.9%**	**50.7%**	**22.4%**
White	38.3%	32.1%	36.0%	**65.8%**
Other	3.2%	3.6%	3.3%	**-**

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Victims & Suspects: Age

	FATAL & NONFATAL SHOOTINGS (N=86)		
	Victims (n=94)	Suspects (n=56)	Victims & Suspects (n=150)
Age			
17 & under	9.6%	**17.9%**	12.7%
18-24	**34.0%**	**35.7%**	**34.7%**
25-34	**28.7%**	**23.2%**	**26.7%**
35-44	17.0%	14.3%	16.0%
45-54	7.5%	7.1%	7.3%
55+	3.2%	1.8%	2.7%
Average Age	29.5	27.1	28.6

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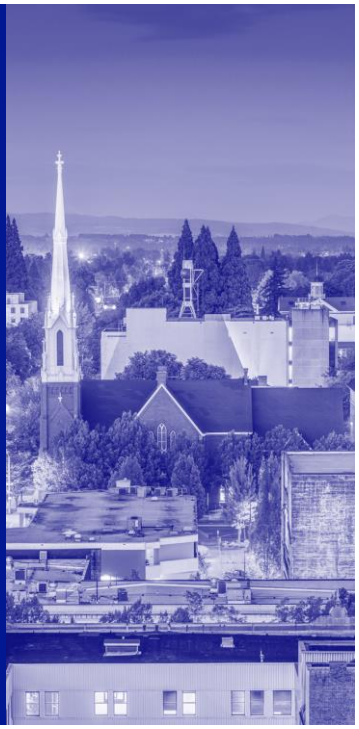
VIOLENCE ANALYSIS

Youth Involvement in Violence



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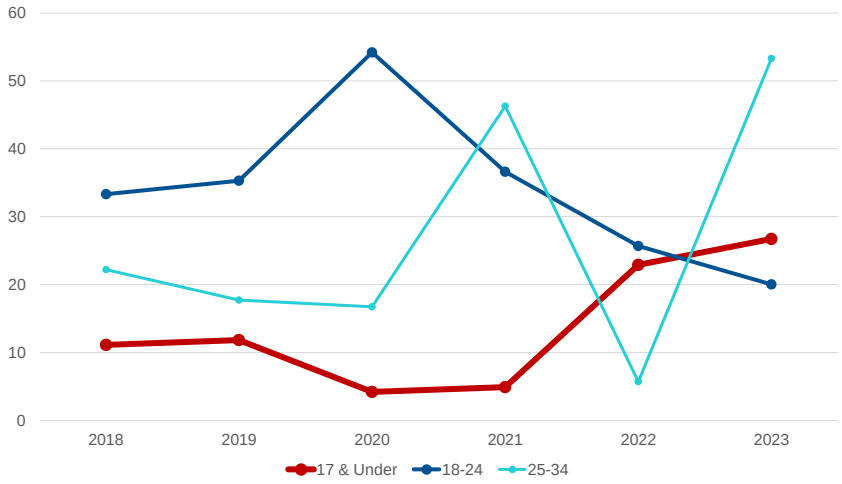
Victims & Suspects: Percent Involved by Age



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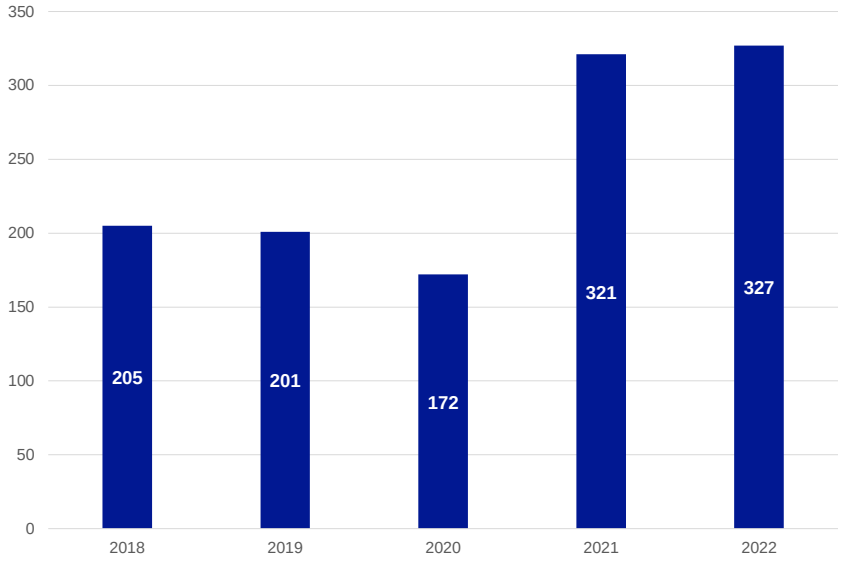
Aggravated Assault Arrest Events 2018-2022



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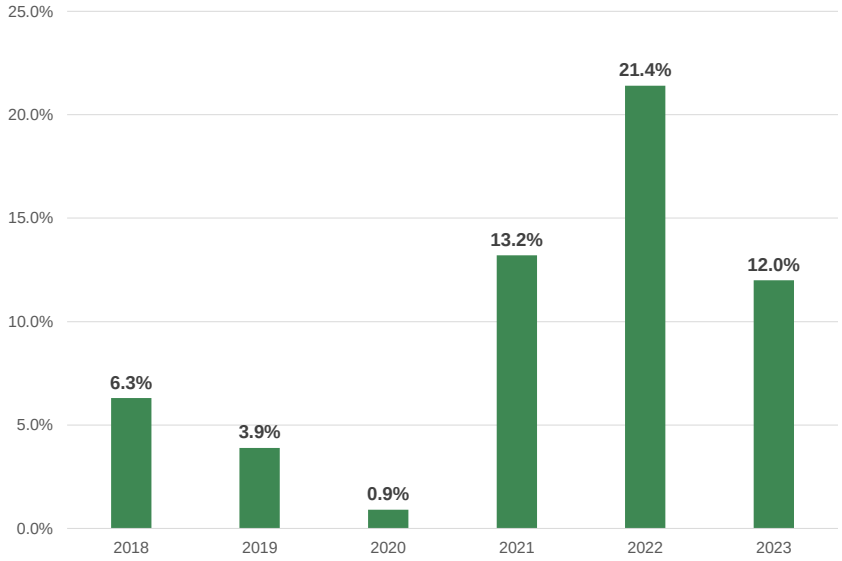
Aggravated Assault Arrest Events 2018-2023:
Percent Juvenile Arrestees



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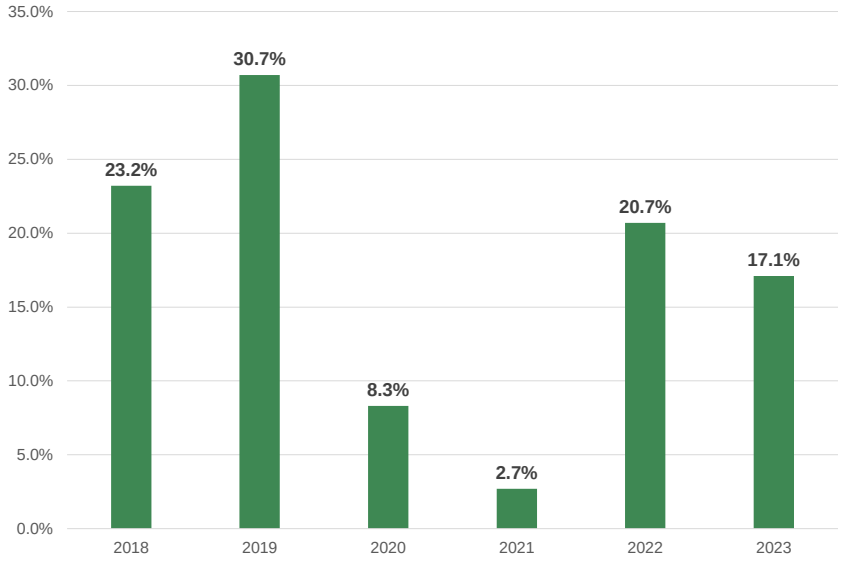
Aggravated Assault Arrest Events 2018-2023:
Percent Juvenile Victims



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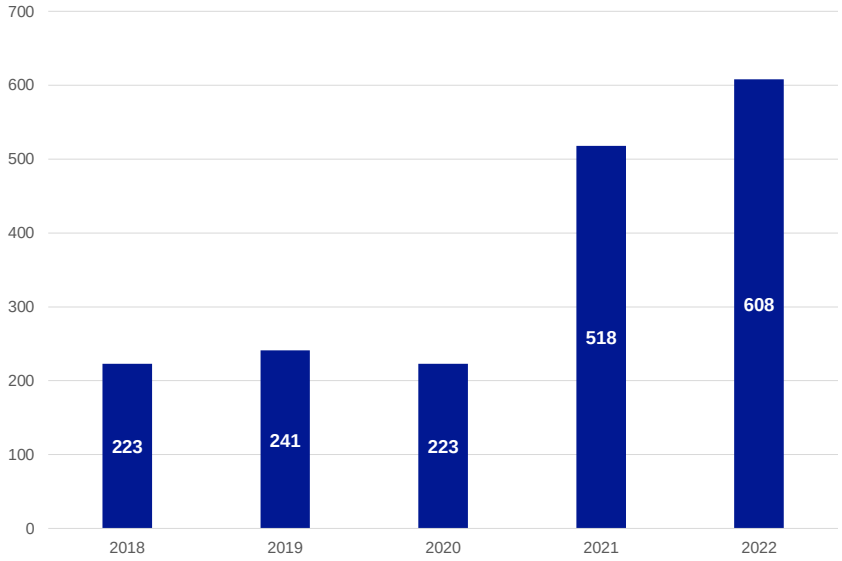
Weapon Violation Arrest Events 2018-2022



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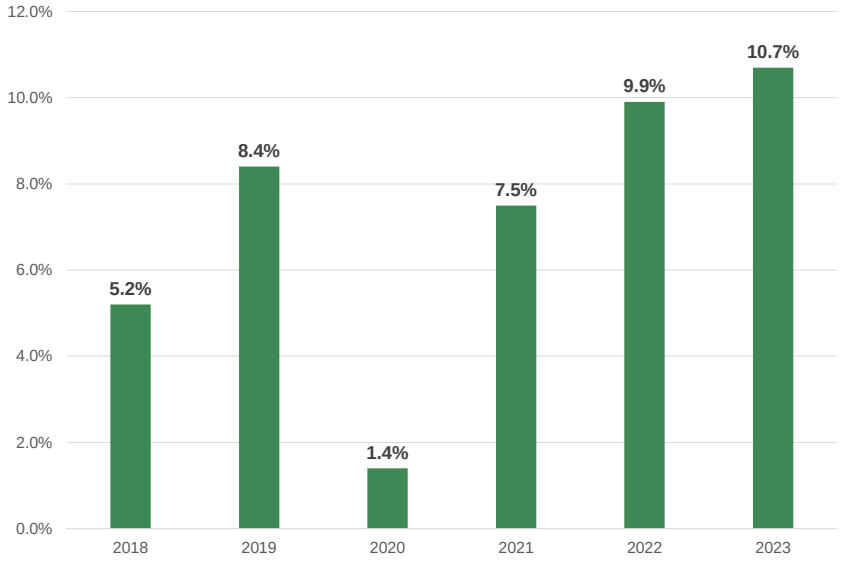
Weapon Violation Arrest Events 2018-2023: Percent Juvenile Arrestees



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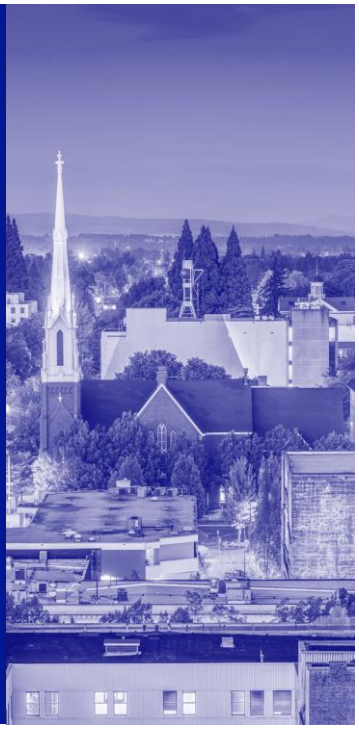
VIOLENCE ANALYSIS

Housing Status



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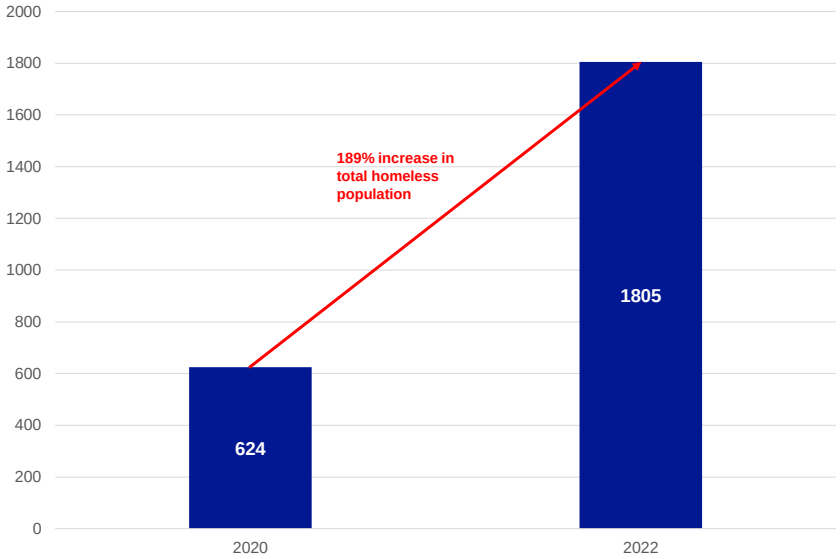
Marion/Polk Counties Homeless Population 2020-2022



Source: 2020 & 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Reports, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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Homicide/Shooting Victims & Suspects: Percent Homeless

	FATAL & NONFATAL SHOOTINGS (N=86)		
	Victims (n=94)	Suspects (n=56)	Victims & Suspects (n=150)
Time Period			
2018-2020 (n=59)	2.6%	19.1%	8.5%
2021-2023 (n=91)	19.6%	20.0%	19.8%
Total	12.7%	19.6%	15.3%

Source: Salem PD Internal Data

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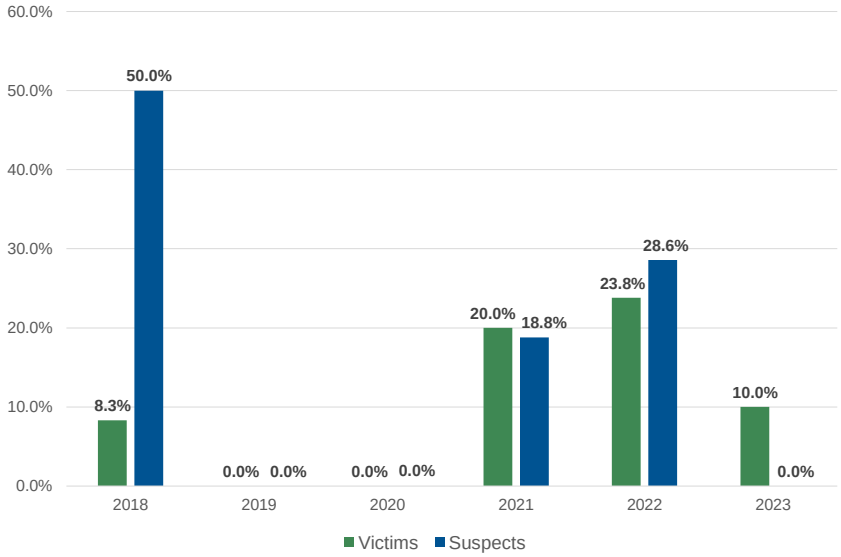
Homicide/Shooting Victims & Suspects: Percent Homeless



Source: Salem PD Internal Data

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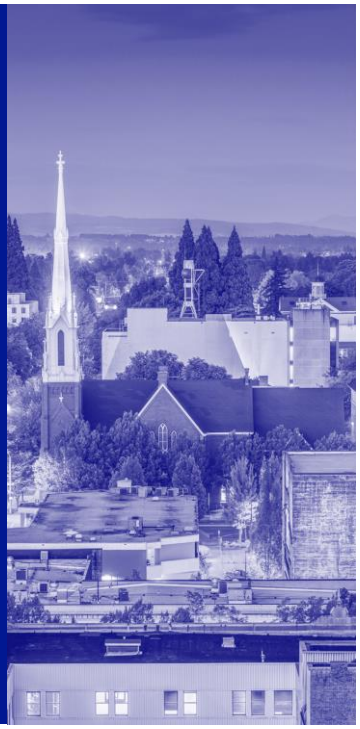
VIOLENCE ANALYSIS

Victim and Suspect Criminal History



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Victims & Suspects: CJ System Contact

	FATAL & NONFATAL SHOOTINGS (N=86)		
	Victims (n=94)	Suspects (n=56)	Victims & Suspects (n=167)
Known to the CJ system prior to the incident	67.0%	71.4%	68.7%
Of those known to the CJ system:			
Prior incarceration	**57.4%**	**48.7%**	**54.1%**
Convicted of felony	**52.5%**	**64.9%**	**57.1%**
Prior probation	**55.7%**	**62.2%**	**58.2%**
Active probation	**16.4%**	**32.5%**	**22.8%**
Prior post-prison supervision	34.4%	37.8%	35.7%
Active post-prison supervision	17.0%	10.0%	14.1%
Average prior arrests	7.4	6.9	7.2
Average prior felony arrests	3.4	3.7	3.5

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Victims & Suspects: Prior Offense Detail

	FATAL & NONFATAL SHOOTINGS (N=86)		
	Victims (n=94)	Suspects (n=56)	Victims & Suspects (n=150)
Of those with prior arrests:	(67.0%)	(71.4%)	(68.7%)
Armed violent offenses	0.2	0.3	0.2
Unarmed violent offenses	**1.4**	**0.9**	**1.2**
Firearm offenses	0.4	0.8	0.6
Drug offenses	**1.2**	**1.7**	**1.4**
Property offenses	**2.1**	**1.7**	**2.0**
Disorder offenses	**1.9**	**2.1**	**2.0**
Fraud offenses	0.4	0.2	0.4
Other offenses	1.7	0.1	1.1
Total	9.1	7.4	8.5

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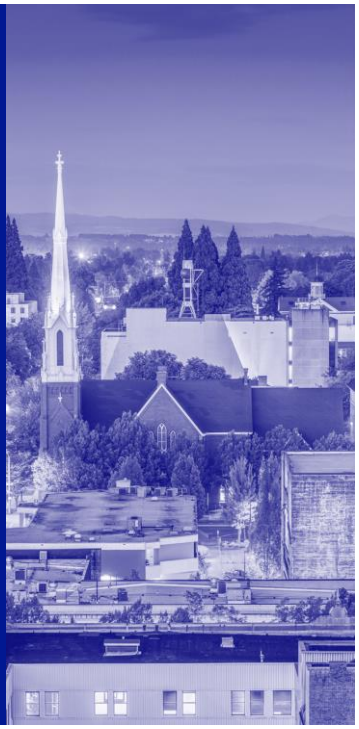
VIOLENCE ANALYSIS

Incident Circumstances



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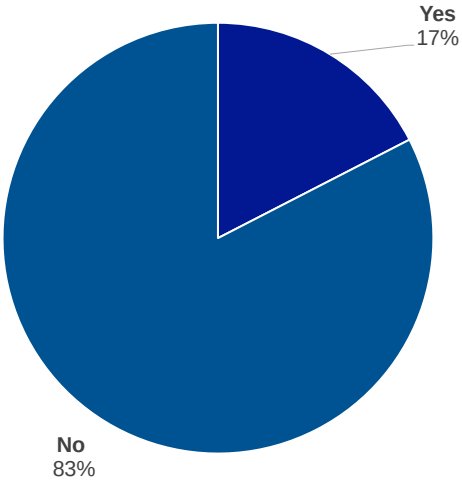
Group/Gang-Related GV Incidents

(Motive for the incident was a group/gang-related conflict)



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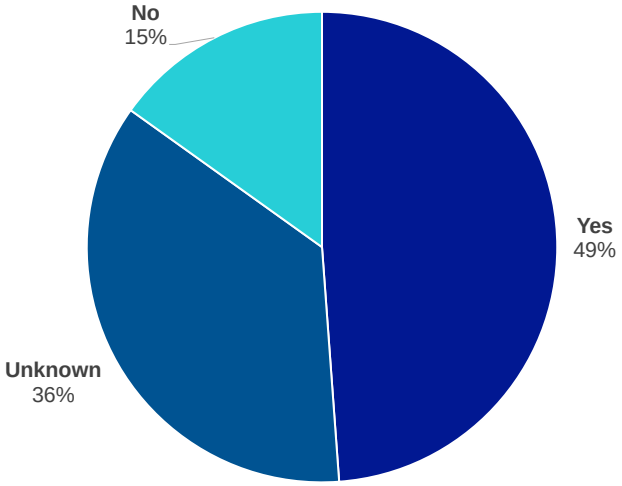
Group/Gang-Member Involvement: GV Incidents

(Victims and/or suspects were group/gang-associated, regardless of incident motive)



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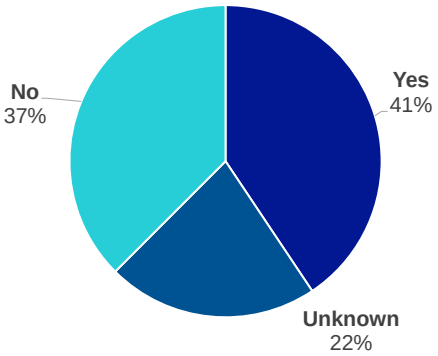
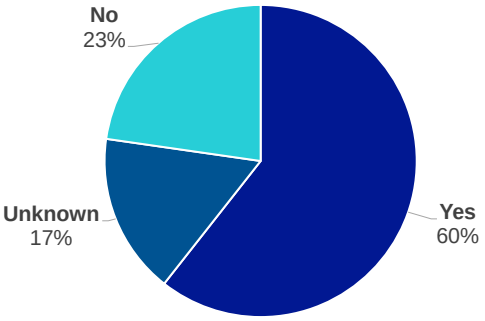
Group/Gang Members: Individuals

Victims
n=94



Suspects
n=56



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Incident Circumstances

Circumstance	N	All GV Incidents (n = 86)	% Incidents GMI
Personal dispute	**21**	**24.4%**	**52.4%**
Group/gang-related dispute	**15**	**17.4%**	**100%**
Instant dispute	**8**	**9.3%**	**37.5%**
Domestic dispute	**5**	**5.8%**	-
Drug-related dispute	**5**	**5.8%**	20.0%
Drug robbery	**2**	**2.3%**	50.0%
Robbery	**2**	**2.3%**	50.0%
Suspected self-inflicted	**2**	**1.2%**	-
Accidental	**1**	**1.2%**	-
Unknown	**25**	**29.1%**	24.0%

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Summary

- The victims and suspects involved in gun violence are predominantly Hispanic (51%) and Black (10%) males (87%) between the ages of 18-34 (61%).
  - Compared to overall Salem population demographics, Hispanic individuals are overrepresented among gun violence victims and suspects by a factor of about 2.3.
  - Similarly, Black individuals are overrepresented among gun violence victims and suspects by a factor of about 7.1.

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Summary

- Though most victims and suspects are aged 18-34, juveniles comprise a notable proportion (18%) of suspects in gun violence incidents. This proportion is slightly higher than our team has observed in other cities conducting gun violence problem analyses.
- Year-over-year trends show an increasing proportion of juveniles involved in gun violence in 2022-2023 specifically.
  - Juveniles made up about 5-10% of victims and suspects in 2018-2021.
  - Juveniles made up more than 20% of victims and suspects in 2022-2023.
- An analysis of SPD arrest data additionally shows that when the period of 2018-2020 is compared to the period of 2021-2023, there was a:
  - 320% average increase in the proportion of juveniles arrested for aggravated assaults
  - 35% average decrease in the proportion of juveniles victimized in aggravated assaults
  - 88% average increase in the proportion of juveniles arrested for weapon law violations.

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Summary

- Data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) shows a 189% increase in the total homeless population counted in Marion/Polk counties from 2020 to 2022.
- When reviewing the period of 2018-2020 compared to 2021-2023, there is no change in the proportion of suspects noted as homeless.
- However, there was a statistically significant increase in the proportion of victims noted as homeless– increasing from about 3% to about 20% of victims.
- Across all gun violence incidents included in this sample, about 15% of victims and suspects overall were noted to be homeless.
- Incidents involving homeless individuals did not differ significantly in circumstances when compared to the rest of the sample.
  - 50% were due to personal disputes, often over property, prior thefts, or miscellaneous interpersonal arguments.
  - 28% were due to unknown circumstances.

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Summary

- According to OR criminal history data, at least 69% of victims and suspect had prior criminal justice system contact before their involvement in these incidents.
- Of those with prior arrests, most have extensive criminal involvement:
  - 54% had been previously incarcerated and 57% had been convicted of a felony.
  - 58% had prior probation and 23% were on active probation
  - 36% had prior post-prison supervision and 14% were on active post-prison supervision
  - Victims and suspects committed an average 8.5 prior criminal offenses before their involvement in the gun violence incident– predominantly property, disorder, drug, and unarmed violent offenses, respectively.

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Summary

- About 17% of incidents involved motives relating solely to group/gang-related conflicts.
- Additionally, at least 49% of incidents involved group/gang members as victims, suspects, or both.
- Regardless of group/gang member involvement, most gun violence incidents in Salem evolve from personal disputes between known individuals (24%), group/gang-related conflicts (17%), and instant disputes (9%).

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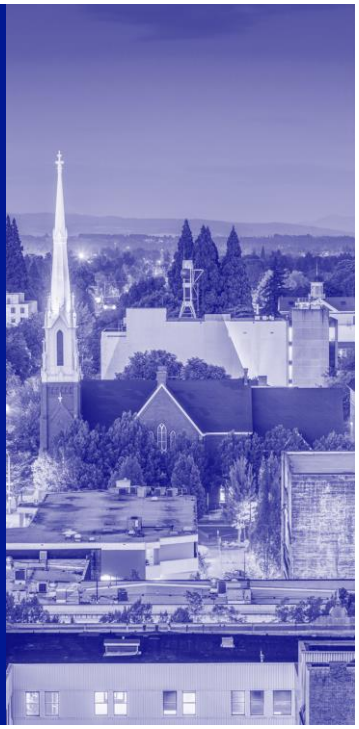
HIGH-RISK GROUPS AND NETWORKS



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Introduction

- This section presents information about active high-risk violent networks in Salem.
- SPD personnel identified at least **8 active groups/gangs** in the city.
- All of these identified groups/gangs are predominantly Hispanic gangs falling into Norteño and Sureño subsets.

- Groups/gangs are engaged in a variety of criminal activities for profit:
  - Groups/gangs are primarily engaged in narcotics and weapons trafficking.
  - Members also generate criminal profit through thefts, carjackings, and marijuana crimes.

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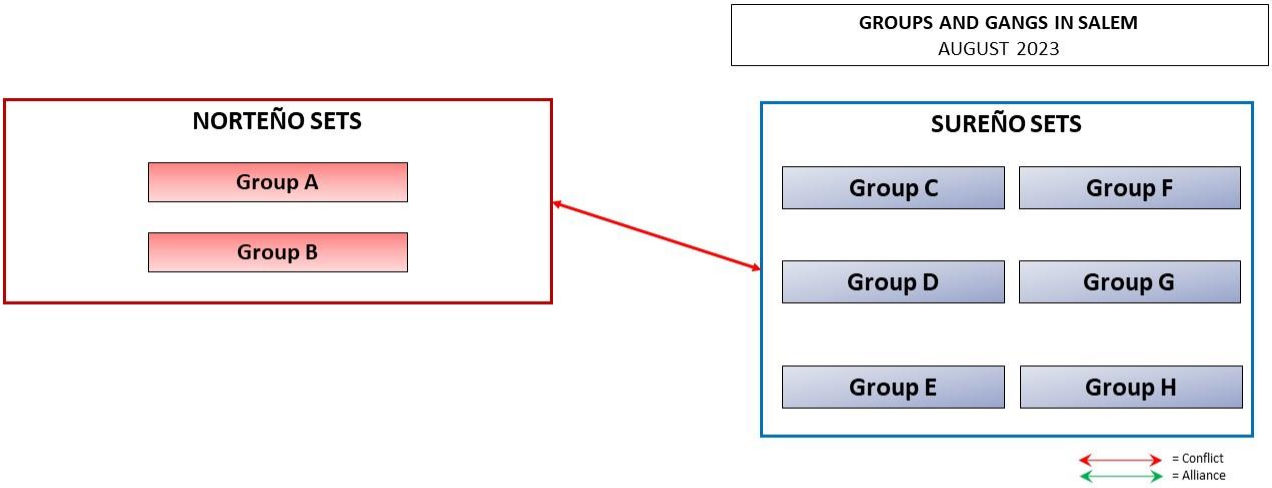
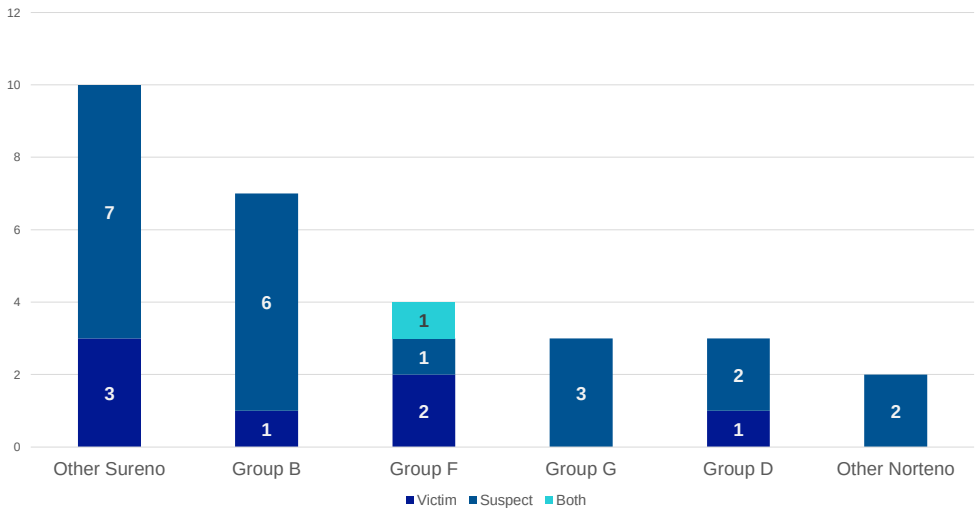
Identified Gangs in Salem



47

Gangs Involved in 2+ Shootings



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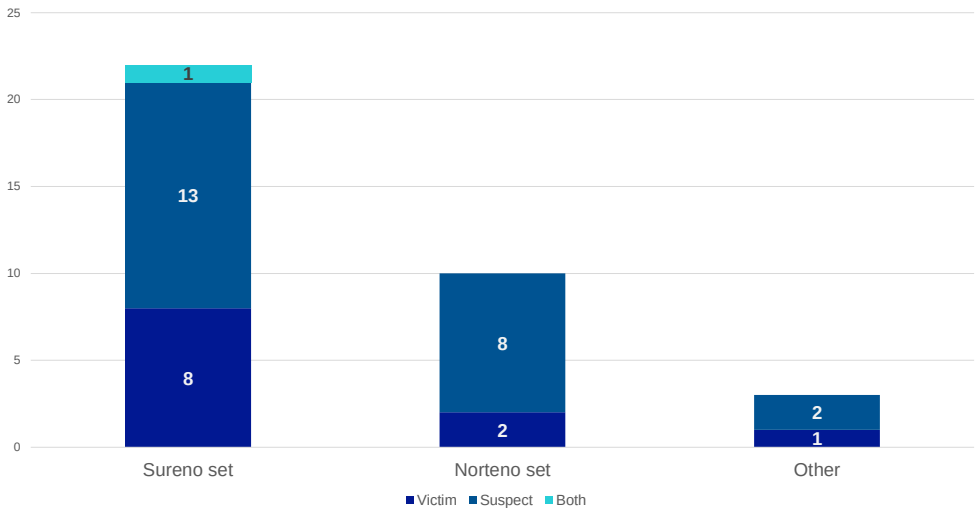
Sureño/Norteño Sets Involved in Shootings



49

Summary

- SPD personnel identified at least 8 active groups/gangs in the city.
- The most violently active groups/gangs are sets of Sureños, and both Sureño and Norteño members are more often shooters than they are victims.
- Gun violence incidents in this study– of which nearly half were group/gang-member involved– cluster within about 5.2 square miles, or about 11% of Salem's total land area.

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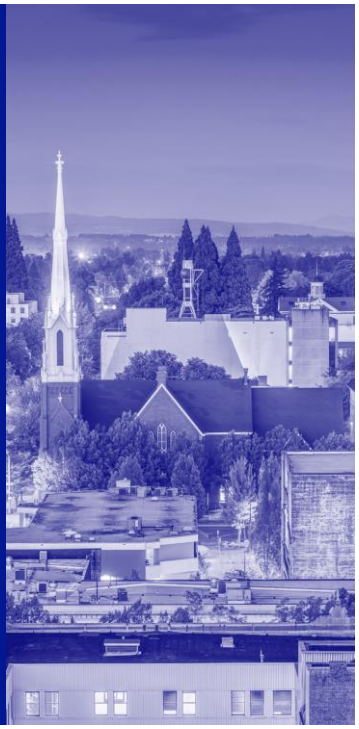
SPATIAL ANALYSIS



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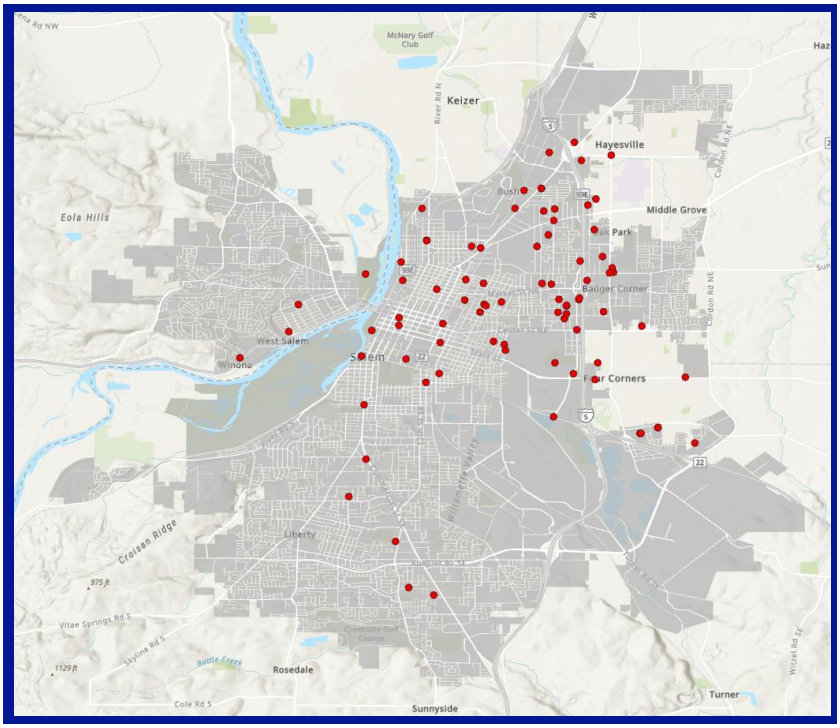
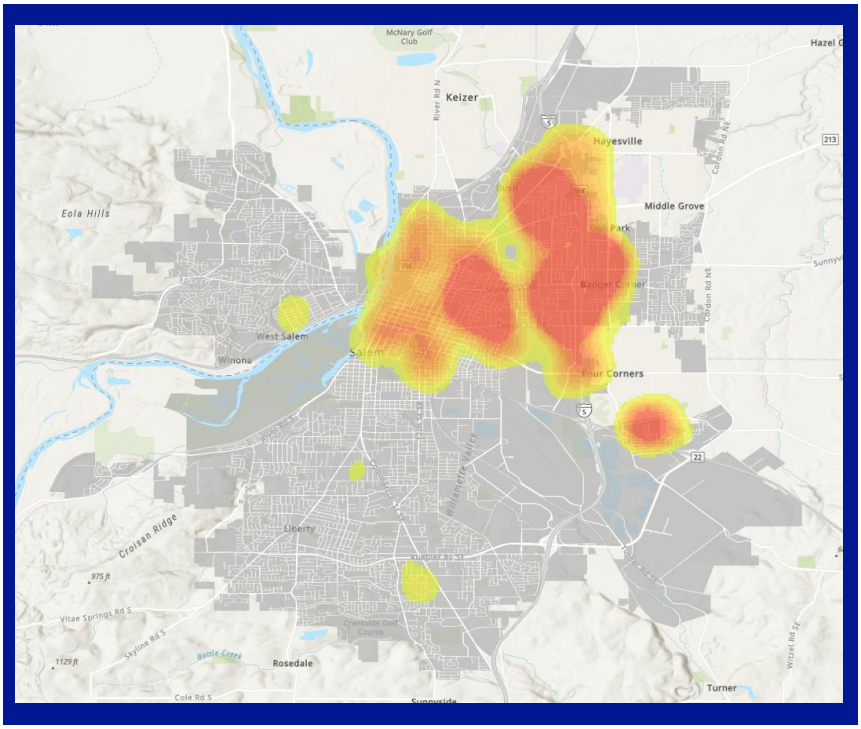
Gun Violence Incidents



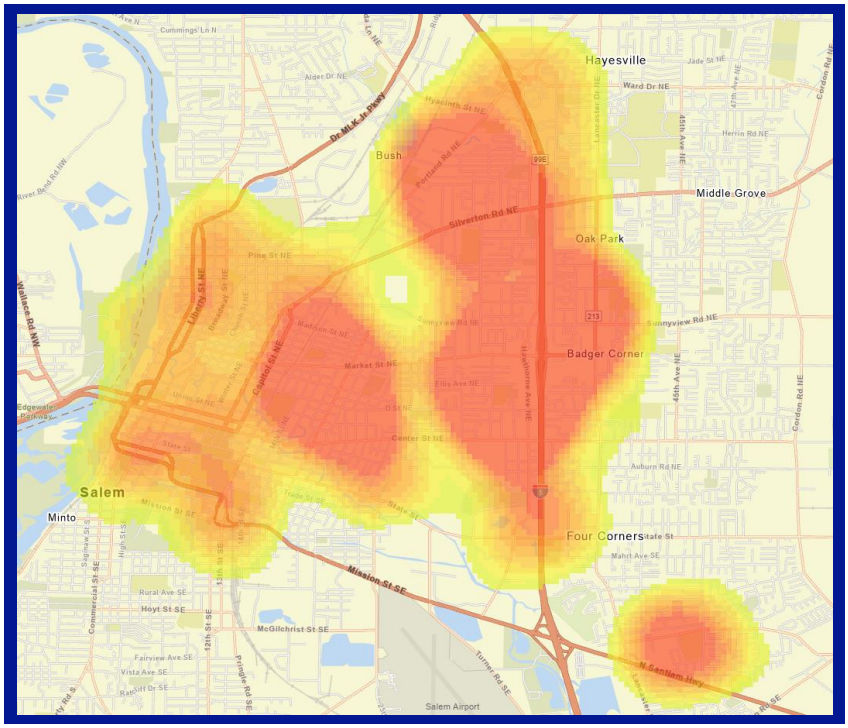
52

Gun Violence Hot Spots



53

Gun Violence Hot Spots



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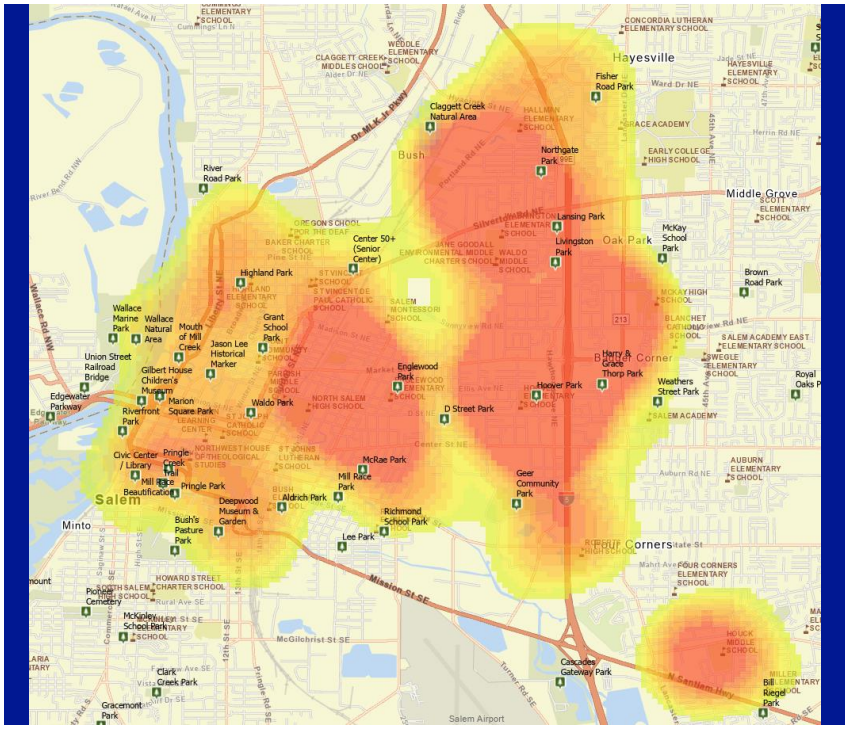
Gun Violence Hot Spots


Hayesville
Middle Grove
Oak Park
Bush
Salem
Minto
Four Corners
Salem Airport
Claggett Creek Natural Area
Fisher Road Park
Northgate Park
Lansing Park
Livingston Park
McKay School Park
Brown Road Park
River Road Park
Center 50+ (Senior Center)
Highland Park
Wallace Marine Park
Wallace Natural Area
Mouth of Mill Creek
Grant School Park
Jason Lee Historical Marker
Union Street Railroad Bridge
Gilbert House Children's Museum
Edgewater Parkway
Riverfront Park
Marion Square Park
Waldo Park
Englewood Park
Harry & Grace Thorp Park
Hoover Park
Weathers Street Park
Royal Oaks Park
D Street Park
Civic Center / Library
Pringle Creek
Mill Race Beautification
Pringle Park
Deepwood Museum & Garden
Bush's Pasture Park
McRae Park
Mill Race Park
Aldrich Park
Richmond School Park
Lee Park
Geer Community Park
Pioneer Cemetery
McKinley School Park
Clark Creek Park
Gracemont Park
Cascade Gateway Park
Bill Riegel Park
Dr. MLK Jr. Pkwy
Mission St SE
McGilchrist St SE
Wallace Rd NW
River Bend Rd NW
Portland Rd NE
Silverton Rd NE
Lancaster Dr NE
Turner Rd SE
Pringle Rd SE
12th St SE
Commercial St SE
Sagine St SE
High St SE
Rural Ave SE
Fairview Ave SE
Vista Ave SE
Wid Dr SE
Edgewater St SE
Cummings Ln N
Natural Ave N
Ward Dr NE
Herrin Rd NE
Jade St NE
Auburn Rd NE
Mahrt Ave
State St
Center St NE
Ellis Ave NE
Market St NE
Madison St NE
Pine St NE
Alder Dr NE
Lancaster Dr NE
45th Ave NE
47th Ave NE
Lancaster Dr NE
Hazelwood St NE
Lancaster Dr NE
Ridge
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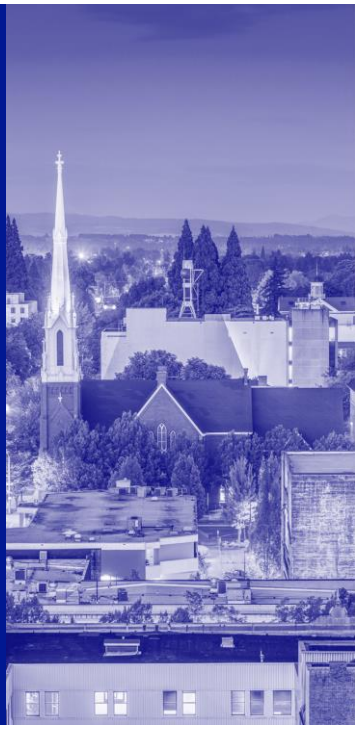
Lancaster Dr

GUN VIOLENCE ANALYSIS

Time Period Comparisons



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GV Victims & Suspects: Demographics

	FATAL & NONFATAL SHOOTINGS (N=86)			
	2018-2020 (n=59)		2021-2023 (n=91)	
	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects
Male	86.8%	90.5%	86.6%	94.3%
Black	7.9%	-	16.1%	8.9%
Hispanic	52.6%	61.9%	41.1%	57.1%
Age Categories				
17 & under	13.2%	-	7.1%	**28.6%**
18-24	39.5%	47.6%	30.4%	28.6%
25-34	15.8%	14.3%	**37.5%**	22.9%

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GV Incidents: Circumstance

	2018-2020	2021-2023
Circumstance	**N=34**	**N=52**
Personal dispute	**26.5%**	**23.5%**
Group/gang-related dispute	**17.7%**	**17.7%**
Drug-related dispute	5.9%	5.9%
Domestic dispute	5.9%	5.9%
Suspected self-inflicted	5.9%	-
Instant dispute	2.9%	**13.7%**
Drug robbery	2.9%	2.0%
Robbery	-	3.9%
Accidental	2.9%	-
Unknown	29.4%	27.5%

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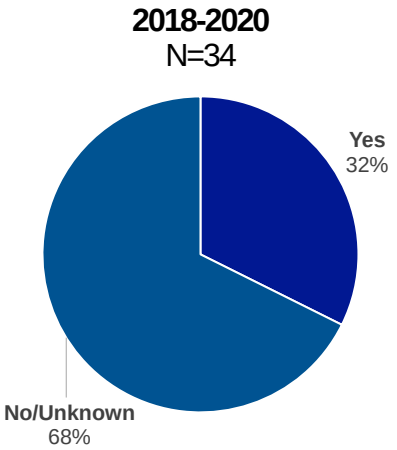
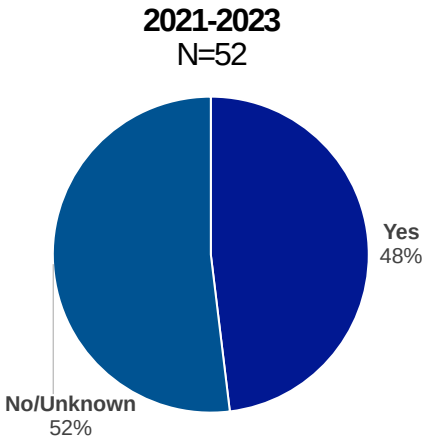
GV Incidents: Group/Gang Member Involvement

(Victims and/or suspects were group/gang-associated, regardless of incident motive)





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Summary

- We compared two time periods of gun violence incidents in Salem: 2018-2020 and 2021-2023.
  - There were no statistically significant changes in the sex or race of victims and suspects across these time periods.
  - There was a statistically significant increase in the proportion of juvenile suspects in 2021-2023 relative to the previous time period. There was also a statistically significant increase in the proportion of victims aged 25-34 in 2021-2023 relative to the previous time period.
- Overall, the circumstances leading to gun violence instances remained remarkably similar across these two time periods. Though, there was a moderately significant increase in the proportion sudden disputes occurring in the 2021-2023 period.
- The proportion of group/gang-member involvement in gun violence incidents did increase in 2021-2023 relative to the previous time period, but this change was not statistically significant.

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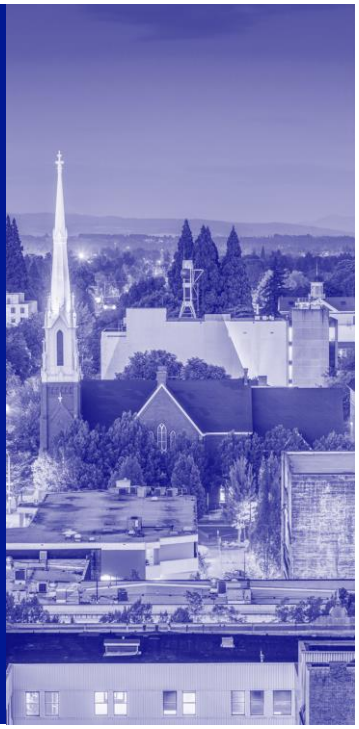
RECOMMENDATIONS



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Summary Findings

- In Salem, most gun violence is tightly concentrated among a small number of very high-risk individuals who share a common set of characteristics like:
  - Hispanic and Black males between the ages of 18-34
  - Group/gang involvement → Significant criminal justice history → Prior felony arrests and prior/active supervision
- At least 49% of homicides and shootings during the study period involved group/gang members as victims, suspects, or both.
- Interviews with law enforcement personnel led to estimates of less than 200 individuals associated with active groups/gangs, or less than .01% of the city's population.
- Gun violence incidents concentrate in less than 11% of the city's land area, encompassing approximately 65% of homicides and shootings from 2018-2023.

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Recommendations

- The findings of this gun violence problem analysis should be used by the SPD and City of Salem to assess their existing and future violence interventions to ensure that they focus on the people, places, and circumstances driving the most violence citywide.
- As the SPD, City of Salem, and Marion County partners shape their ongoing violence reduction strategies, several key recommendations emerge from the findings of this analysis:

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1. Address High-Risk Groups/Gangs

- Individuals associated with groups/gangs drive a significant proportion of gun violence in Salem. Association with a group/gang increases one's risk of being involved in a variety of violent incidents (e.g., personal disputes, group/gang-related conflicts, sudden disputes).

✓ Consider a group violence reduction strategy (GVRS) in the City of Salem that relies on collaborative partnerships between community-based organizations and criminal justice agencies. The development of this GVRS should allow for ongoing innovation and flexibility to address the more fluid and dynamic nature of group/gang associations in the city.

✓ Proactively identifying and intervening with groups/gangs and involved individuals at the highest risk for violence reduces their risk of violence offending and/or victimization. Increase SPD and partner resources dedicated to intelligence gathering and enforcement operations for groups/gangs and involved individuals at the highest risk for involvement in violence.

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2. Engage VHR People

- Those at the very highest risk (VHR) for involvement in gun violence as victims and/or offenders are identifiable and share several common characteristics.

✓ Utilize the data-informed VHR characteristics included in this report to inform who is prioritized for outreach, service delivery, and/or enforcement.

✓ Partners stated that the City of Salem lacks organizations capable of providing intensive case management or mentorship to very high-risk individuals. Identify community-based organizations (CBOs) to work in partnership with the Salem Police Department to engage VHR individuals and provide these critical services.

✓ Develop partnerships and processes to share information and generate referrals for collaborative intervention.

✓ Partner with the Department of Corrections to share information about high-risk individuals being released back into the community. Coordinate with CBOs and other providers for reentry services to reduce recidivism risks.

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3. Identify and Engage Highest-Risk Youth

- While the majority of individuals involved in gun violence were aged 18-34, juveniles did comprise a relatively large proportion of gun violence suspects and youth were increasingly involved in violence in 2022-2023.

✓ Partners felt that the sharing of gang-related intelligence, especially as it pertained to youth, was lacking since the disbanding of the Gang Enforcement Team and removal of SROs from the Salem-Keizer School District (SKSD). Create formal partnerships and processes for reciprocal communication between school and law enforcement personnel focused on young people at the highest risk for involvement in gun violence.

✓ Identify community-based organizations that specialize in intensive case management with at-risk youth. Create relationships and methods that allow the Salem PD to make referrals to these CBOs as at-risk youth are identified.

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4. Focus on High-Risk Places

- Violent hot spots in Salem are tightly clustered and cover approximately 11% of the city's total land area. About 65% of all homicides and nonfatal shootings from 2018-2023 occurred within just over five square miles.

✓ Focus patrols, targeted enforcement, and problem-oriented policing efforts in these locations. Concentrate intelligence-gathering on the VHR groups/gangs and criminal activities driving violence in these areas. Update place-based enforcement priorities regularly to ensure that activities are consistently directed toward the highest-risk areas.

✓ Citywide outreach, service delivery, and other place-based crime prevention projects should prioritize individuals and neighborhoods within these noted locations.

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5. Strengthen Criminal Justice System Partnerships

- About 69% of gun violence victims and suspects were known to the criminal justice system prior to their involvement in a homicide or shooting. Of those, most were extensively criminal justice system involved. About 54% had been previously incarcerated, 57% had been convicted of a felony, and they had committed an average of nine prior criminal offenses.

✓ Develop processes to identify to court personnel the VHR and/or group/gang-involved individuals who are arrested for gun or violent offenses with the goal of immediate intervention to reduce one's risk of violent victimization or offending.

✓ These partnerships can aid in bond/sanction considerations that may reduce the likelihood that individuals known to law enforcement will reoffend, retaliate, or be released back into gang-on-gang conflicts where further violence can occur.

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