



Corners



# Issue Brief: The Landscape of Latino Gun Violence Victimization in Chicago

December 2022

Northwestern

**CORNERS**

CENTER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD  
ENGAGED RESEARCH & SCIENCE

## Acknowledgements

Corners gratefully acknowledges the following for their contribution to this report:

Chelsie Coren  
Angelica D'Souza  
Maria Garza  
Azucena Lopez

Jorge Matos  
Soledad Adrianzén McGrath  
Milan Rivas

Special thanks to Matthew DeMateo and representatives from the following organizations for graciously offering their time and expertise at the roundtable convening:

ALSO  
Metropolitan Family Services  
Institute for Nonviolence Chicago  
Enlace Chicago

Challenge II Change  
New Life Centers  
Heartland Alliance  
Envision

Suggested citation: Center for Neighborhood Engaged Research & Science (Corners). 2022 (December 16). *Issue Brief: The Landscape of Latino Gun Violence in Chicago*.

*Front cover: Mural at the Pan de Vida food pantry at New Life Centers (South Lawndale.*

*Photo credit: Communities Partnering 4 Peace*



## Key Takeaways

1. **Administrative definitions of the Latino community are unclear and inconsistent across data sources, likely underrepresenting the scope and scale of Latino gun violence victimization.**
2. **The proportion of Latino population is decreasing in historic centers like the Lower West Side and increasing in peripheral community areas like Garfield Ridge.**
3. **Consistent with prior research, Latino victimization happens in geographically distinct areas and travels in patterns through co-arrest networks. Despite these patterns, Latino victimization affects the whole city.**

### Introduction

Gun violence is an urgent, but often overlooked, issue in Latino<sup>1</sup> communities. With hundreds of Latinos shot and killed every year<sup>2</sup>, it is important to understand the unique forces that drive violence in Latino communities. This brief provides a descriptive overview of Latino gun violence victimization in Chicago. While most analysis in this brief is done at the city scale, we acknowledge that Latino communities in Chicago are diverse and that community violence intervention organizations who work in these communities employ different approaches that are responsive to their hyper-local context. We examine definitions, demographics, and gun violence networks before concluding with a summary of a convening of

practitioners, leaders, and researchers in December 2022.

### Definitions & Demographics

This brief uses two official data sources with important limitations. First, the U.S. Census Bureau allows individuals to self-report whether they are Hispanic or Latino, independent of race. However, the Census Bureau reports that the undercount of Latinos in the 2020 Census is estimated to be three times higher than in 2010. Second, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) codes individuals as “White Hispanic” or “Black Hispanic” at the time of victimization or arrest. Because these categories are chosen by officers rather than self-reported, and because the

<sup>1</sup>In this brief, we use the term Latino as a pan-ethnic label to refer to the community that traces its roots to Spanish-speaking Latin America and Spain. According to the Pew Research Center, more people self-identify as Latino and/or Hispanic than Latinx. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/11/about-one-in-four-u-s-hispanics-have-heard-of-latinx-but-just-3-use-it/>

<sup>2</sup>Chicago Police Department shooting data. <https://data.cityofchicago.org>

“Black Hispanic” category is underutilized<sup>3</sup>, there is likely an undercount of Latino gun violence victimization in these official data sources.

Of the 2.7 million residents in Chicago, about one third are Latino (29%). From 2010 to 2020, Latinos moved out of interior community areas and towards the periphery of the city. Figure 1 shows the change in the share of Latino

population by community area from 2010 to 2020, highlighting reductions in historical centers of the Latino community. Chicago saw the greatest decreases in the share of Latino population in the Lower West Side (-16.3%), Logan Square (-15.1%), and McKinley Park (-14.3%), and the greatest increases in the share of Latino population in Garfield Ridge (+14.5%), Clearing (+11.4%), and East Side (+11.1%).

**Change in Latino Percentage of Population**  
*From 2010 to 2020, by Community Area*

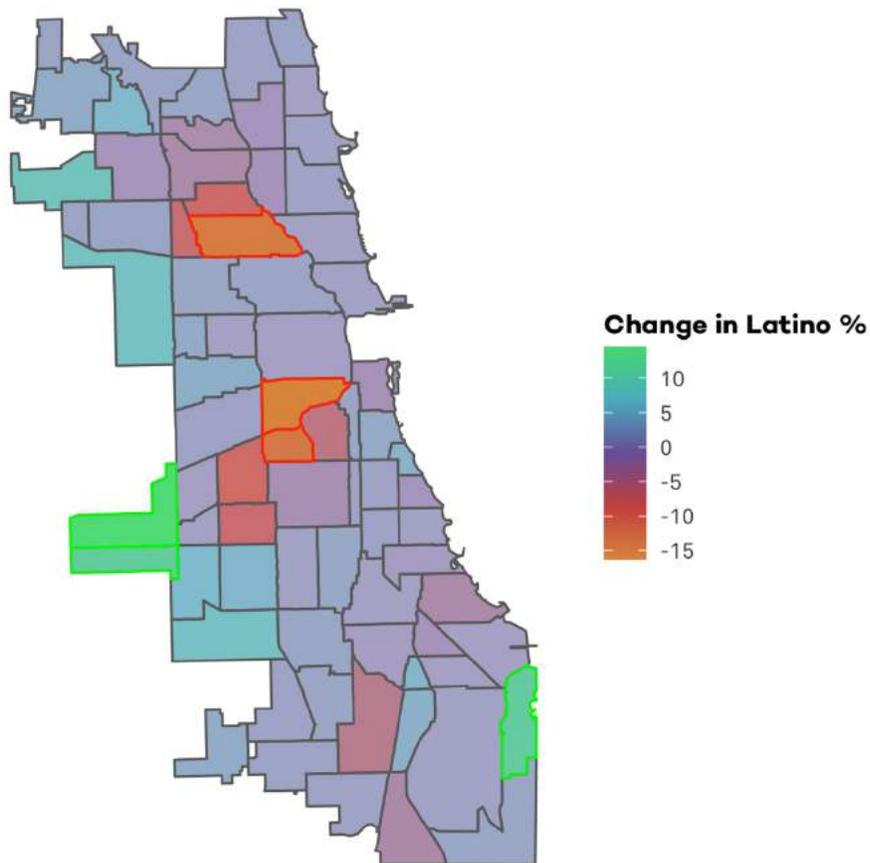


Figure 1: Change in Latino Percentage of Population from 2010 to 2020, by Community Area

<sup>3</sup> From conversation with Chicago and New York City's respective police departments, it appears that allowing individuals to self-identify their racial and ethnic identities is a practice significantly more utilized within the NYPD. We believe that this policy, in combination with demographic differences between the two cities, works to explain the much higher usage rate of the Black Hispanic category in New York's data. Therefore, there is a section of the Latino population that is currently mischaracterized in CPD data sources

## Gun Violence Networks

Since 2011, there have been 1,029 fatal and 3,132 non-fatal shooting victimizations of Latinos in Chicago. Compared to the national Latino homicide rate of 3.81/100,000<sup>4</sup>, Chicago’s Latino homicide rate is

approximately three times higher at 13.1/100,000<sup>5</sup>. Latino victims are concentrated in Chicago’s northwest, southwest, and far southeast sides (Figure 2), which mirrors where most Latinos live.

### **Latino Victims of Gun Violence** *Chicago, 2011-Present*

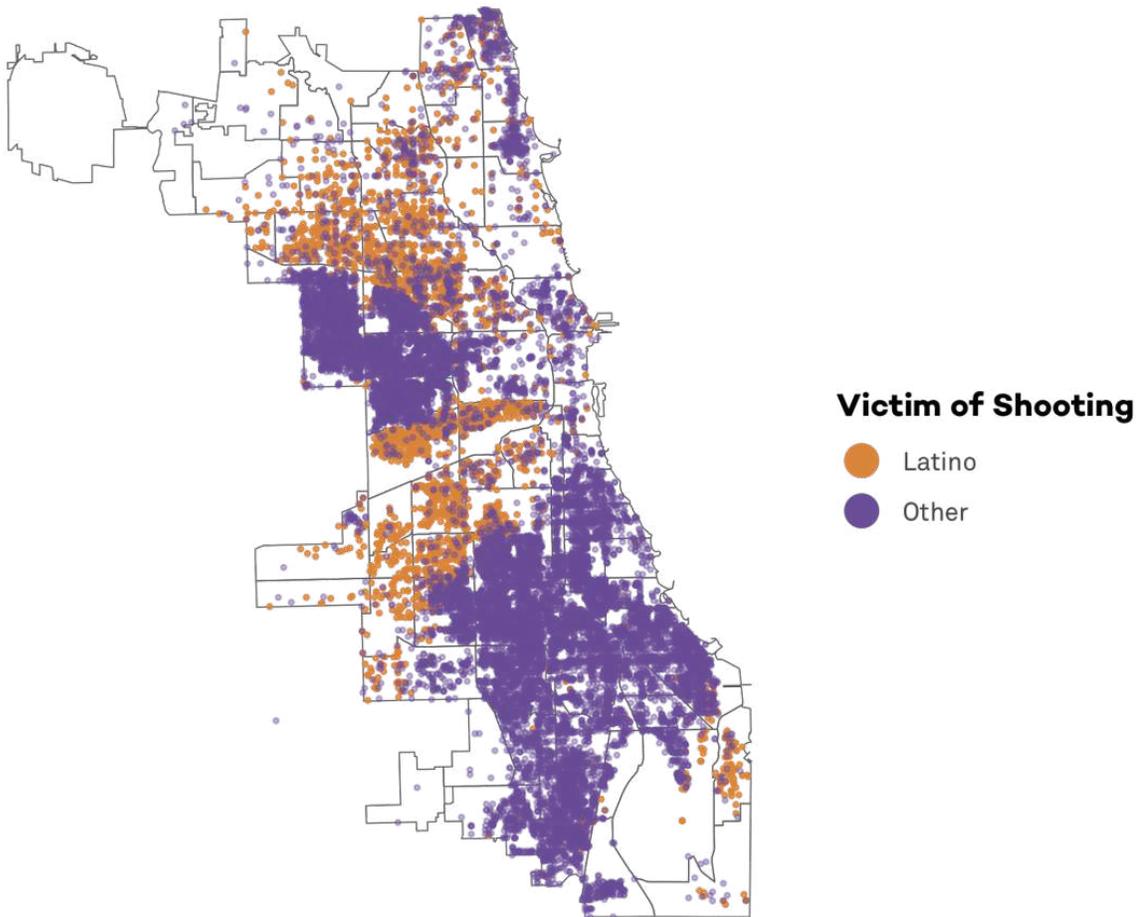


Figure 2: Latino Victims of Gun Violence, 2011 - Present

<sup>4</sup> CDC Wonder. <https://wonder.cdc.gov>

<sup>5</sup> The national Latino homicide rate is age-adjusted, while the Chicago rate is not. Without age adjustment, the national rate may be slightly higher than the listed figure.

In addition to Latino victimization being geographically concentrated, Latino victim co-arrest networks show high ethnic homogeneity. Figure 3 shows the co-arrest network for all Latino victims in Chicago since 2011. This co-arrest network shows Latino victims in orange and victims of any other race in purple, with lines connecting individuals that have been arrested together. Of the 11,579 network members, 71% are Latino. Of the 2,250 victims in the network, 70% are Latino. The large

proportion of Latinos in the network mirrors Chicago's residential segregation and research on other demographic groups. These findings show that gun violence in Latino communities is not random but concentrates among social networks and neighborhoods. Despite this, it is a citywide issue as Latino victims are connected through co-arrest network ties to almost every community in the city (Figure 4).

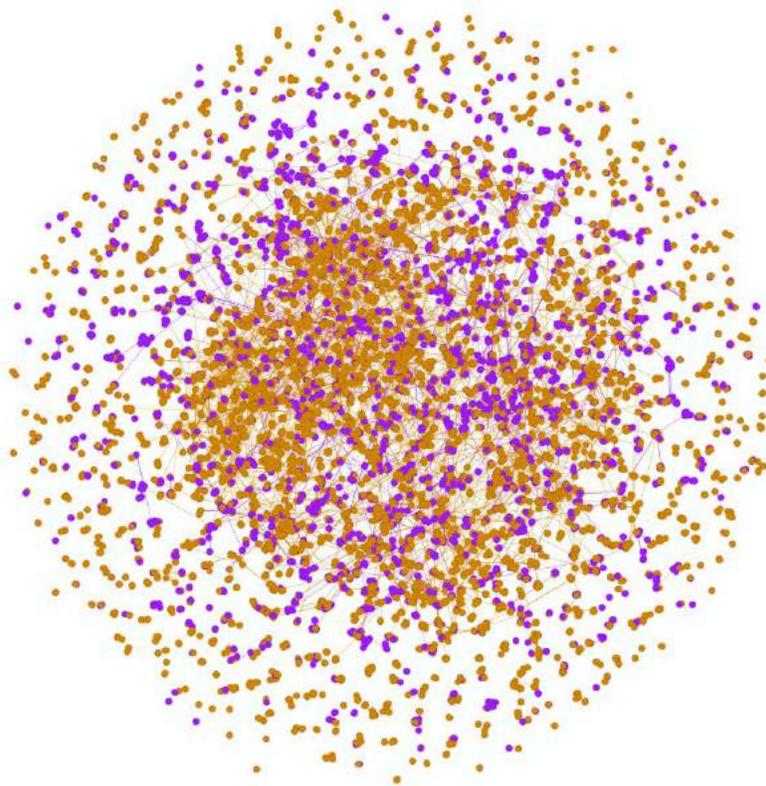


Figure 3: Co-Arrest Network for Latino Victims, 2011 – Present (Latino network members in orange, all other groups in purple)

While looking at the issue citywide provides important insights about gun violence concentration and impact, community violence intervention practitioners work at the neighborhood-

or block-level. Each community's unique history and local conflict dynamics inform how these organizations approach their work. For example, in Humboldt Park, Latino victims are part

of a co-arrest network of 1,778 individuals, 66.4% of which are Latino. In Belmont Cragin, Latino victims are part of a co-arrest network of 1,211 individuals, 79.0% of which are Latino. The proportion of Latinos in the Humboldt Park network is lower than Belmont Cragin because of the relative

diversity of the neighborhood and the interactions that this facilitates. Still, Humboldt Park's network touches 36 community areas and Belmont Cragin's network touches 34 community areas, showing that victimizations in these community areas affect residents across the city.

**Latino Network Centroid Map**  
*From Latino Shooting Victims*

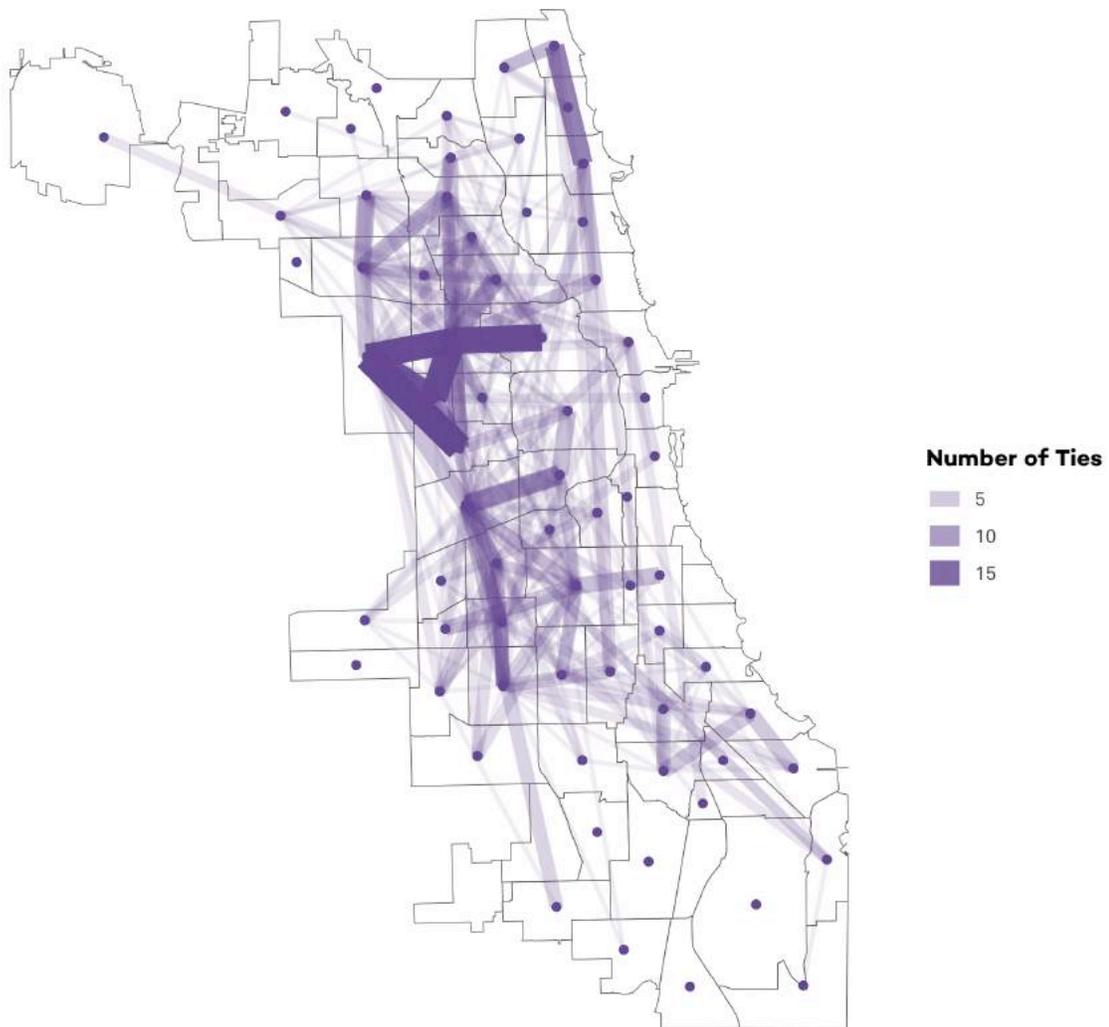


Figure 4: Map of Latino Victim Network Ties, 2011 - Present

## A Call to Action

### Convening of Community

Against this backdrop, several organizations in Chicago work at the local level to proactively address gun violence in Latino communities, including Alliance of Local Service Organizations (ALSO), Claretian Associates, Enlace, Envision, Institute for Non-Violence Chicago (INVC), New Life Centers, Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), and Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP), among others. On December 6, 2022, a group of community violence intervention practitioners, leaders, and researchers convened at New Life Centers in Little Village. The roundtable discussion, facilitated by Jorge Matos, Senior Director for READI Chicago at Heartland Alliance, focused on the impact of gun violence in Latino communities and elevating the voice of community leaders. Attendees included representatives from ALSO, Challenge II Change, Corners, Enlace, Envision, Heartland Alliance, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago (INVC), Metropolitan Family Services, and New Life Centers.

To provide city- and neighborhood-level context, Corners presented the data found in this brief and shared one-page handouts for each community area represented. These handouts included information about the proportion of Latino victims, demographic changes,

and network characteristics for each community area. For most attendees, the data confirmed their experience working directly in these communities.

Participants reflected on the history of community violence intervention efforts, the evolution of the field, the persistent challenges of addressing gun violence, and the distinct factors driving violence in Latino communities. Participants shared a desire for more collaboration and coordination among organizations that work in Latino communities to support their day-to-day work and stressed the importance of proactively developing the next generation of leaders. Attendees emphasized the need for accessible and robust data collection to provide an accurate understanding of the scope and scale of violence in Latino communities and to inform sustainable solutions. The group discussed funding challenges and called for more streamlined opportunities and capacity building. Furthermore, attendees shared that the burden of receiving funding with strict reporting requirements impinges on their ability to hire and appropriately care for their staff who dedicate themselves to the healing of entire communities. The event concluded with a shared commitment to continue meeting to work towards a shared strategy for addressing gun violence in Latino communities in Chicago.



Corners

*The Center for Neighborhood Engaged Research & Science (Corners) is housed at Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research. We develop transformative research projects with community and civic partners aimed at improving health and safety for more equitable neighborhoods.*

2040 Sheridan Road  
Evanston IL 60208  
1 (847) 491-7471  
[Cornersresearch.org](http://Cornersresearch.org)

Northwestern