



CYCLE OF RISK:

**THE INTERSECTION OF POVERTY,
VIOLENCE, AND TRAUMA**

REPORT ON ILLINOIS POVERTY

March 2017

**HEARTLAND
ALLIANCE**

ENDING POVERTY

ABOUT THE ART

This report features images of artwork by Ervin A. Johnson, Heartland Alliance's artist in residence. Heartland Alliance is fortunate to be part of a unique collaboration with the Photography Department at Columbia College Chicago under the auspices of the Diane Dammeyer Fellowship in Photographic Arts and Social Issues. This post-graduate fellowship creates a space for a socially engaged artist to produce a compelling and dynamic body of work highlighting human rights and social issues. The goal of the fellowship is to utilize photographic practice as a point of departure for dialogue and engagement, elevating awareness of social, economic, and cultural issues by connecting subject, audience, and community to inspire positive social change.

The portraits are part of his most recent body of work, #InHonor, in which Ervin pays homage to the lives lost to police brutality and racism. The work speaks to the racial violence and discrimination currently occurring across America, but it also seeks to validate and celebrate black lives. In this way, the work speaks not only to the preservation of the individual but in a deeper way of humanity. To see more pieces from this series, visit www.inhonorofus.com.



REPORT INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

Chicago is currently facing a devastating surge in lethal violence in addition to staggering rates of poverty across Illinois. Policymakers and community leaders are struggling with finding short- and long-term solutions to stem the violence and allow neighborhoods to heal. In the meantime, communities are fearing for their own safety and grieving over lost parents, children, friends, and leaders every day. The stakes for getting the solutions right could not be higher.

Poverty and violence often intersect, feed one another, and share root causes. Neighborhoods with high levels of violence are also characterized by high levels of poverty, lack of adequate public services and educational opportunity, poorer health outcomes, asset and income inequality, and more. The underlying socioeconomic conditions in these neighborhoods perpetuate both violence and poverty.

Furthermore, trauma can result from both violence and poverty. Unaddressed trauma worsens quality of life, makes it hard to rise out of poverty by posing barriers to success at school and work, and raises the likelihood of aggressive behavior. In this way, untreated trauma—coupled with easy gun availability and other factors—feeds the cycle of poverty and violence.

In last year's Report on Illinois Poverty: Racism's Toll (2016), we explored the persistent inequity caused by racially discriminatory policies and practices. Many of those themes are critically important to this discussion as well, especially given how the American justice system has been used to systemically deny opportunities and rights to people of color. A past and living legacy of segregation and the perpetuation of racial inequity today have led people and communities of color to experience poverty at higher rates than whites. The harmful policies and practices explored in last year's report have stripped resources and opportunities from many of the communities that are grappling with violence today.

Through this report we make the case that, in addition to rapid responses, we must also take a long-term approach to reducing violence. The causes of violence are complex, systemic, and long-standing—and we must take a comprehensive approach to address them effectively. Importantly, we must be cautious that efforts at short- or long-term reform do not perpetuate the very inequities and conditions that have led to violence in our communities.

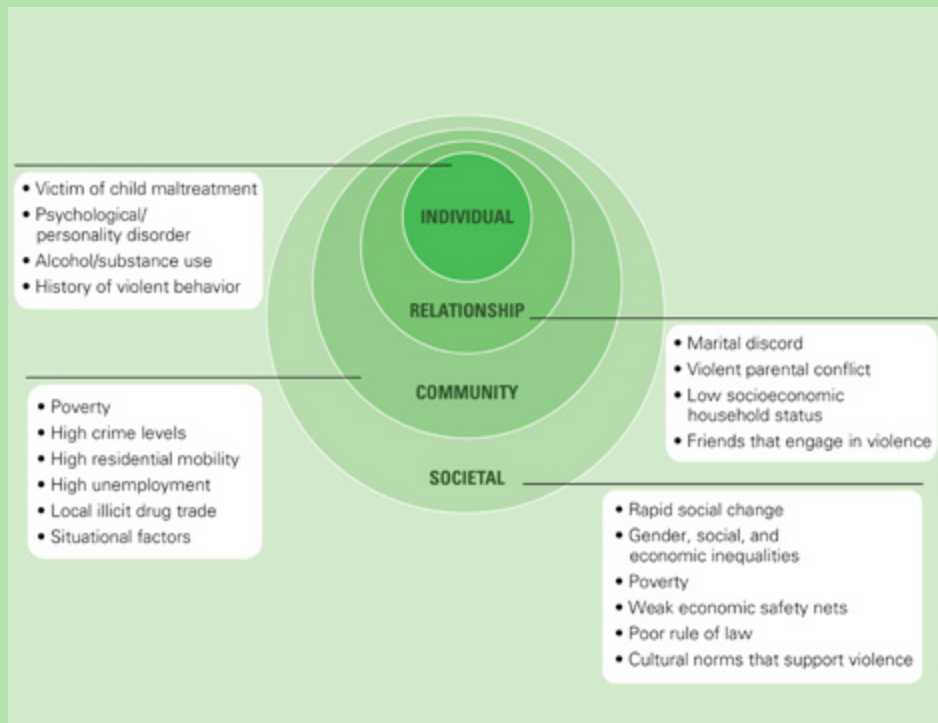
“ A long-term commitment to reducing violence must include a long-term commitment to lifting people out of poverty and addressing the effects of trauma. ”

TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Violence manifests in many ways—through gun violence, domestic violence, child abuse, torture, and the deprivation of basic rights and liberties. Though we do not have the space in this report to cover all forms of violence, we take a fairly expansive view since there are common themes among the causes and effects of violence in its many forms. Healing from trauma is just as important for a gun violence survivor as a domestic violence survivor and survivor of prison abuse.

The framework for understanding violence in this report is based on an ecological model that is grounded in evidence that shows that no one factor can explain why some people are more at risk of violence than others. Instead, we must look at how factors at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels interact to get a full picture of the forces that foster violence.

Source: Violence Prevention Alliance. The ecological framework; [available here](#).



GUIDE TO THE REPORT

This report begins by providing a snapshot of the state of poverty in Illinois. From there, we dive into our special focus on violence, beginning with an overview of trends in violence in Chicago and Illinois. We make the case that the conditions that foster violence and the conditions that perpetuate poverty are interconnected and reinforce each other; we further show the traumatic effects of violence—and how trauma drives both poverty and violence. We then examine how violence has been used to enforce systems of racial oppression and how communities of color are disparately impacted by violence today. We share data on how Illinois is doing on a number of factors that support quality of life for all Illinoisans and, when absent, can foster both poverty and violence. Finally, we propose recommendations to change the underlying conditions in communities deeply impacted by poverty and violence.

To find detailed data by county, read past reports, see interactive data visualizations, and more, visit www.heartlandalliance.org/povertyreport





ILLINOIS POVERTY PROFILE

As this section illustrates, millions of people in Illinois are experiencing poverty, and that experience is holding them back from realizing the innate rights that each of us have by virtue of simply being human.

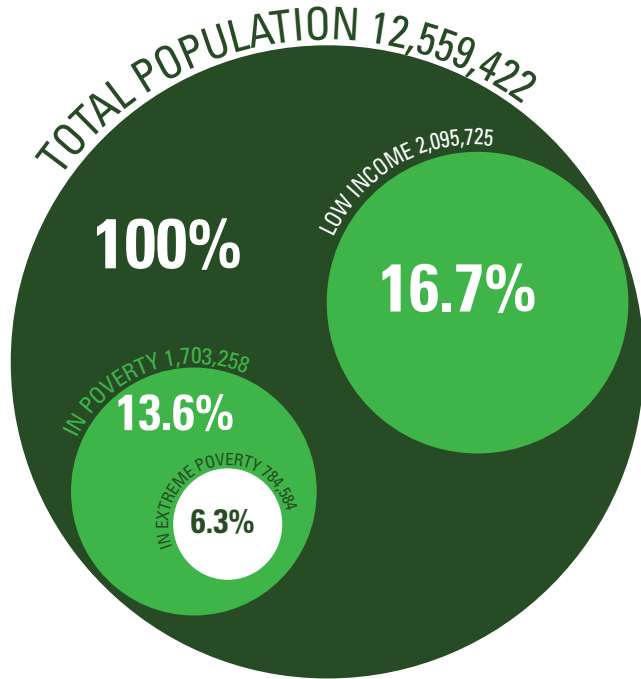
- Over one-third of Illinoisans are considered low-income or living in poverty.
- Illinois's poverty rate is stuck where it was during the Great Recession.
- Nearly 2 in 5 black children and more than 1 in 4 Latino children in Illinois live in poverty.
- People of color and children have the highest rates of poverty in Illinois.
- Nearly half of Chicagoans are considered low-income or living in poverty.
- A growing percentage of the region's poor are living in the suburbs.

Many of the groups most impacted by poverty—such as people of color—are also disproportionately impacted by violence.

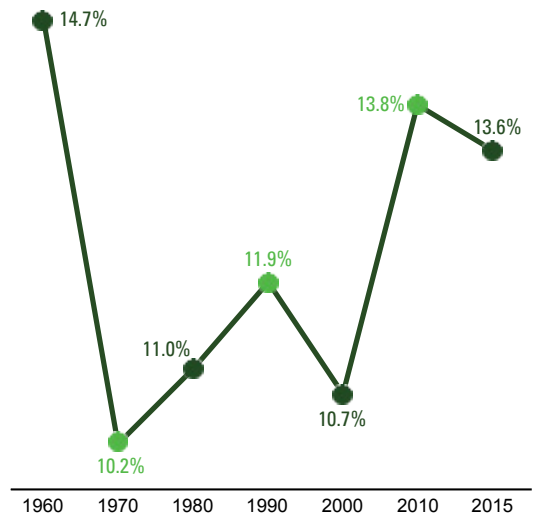


OVERVIEW

Scale of Illinois poverty, 2015¹



Illinois Poverty Over Time²



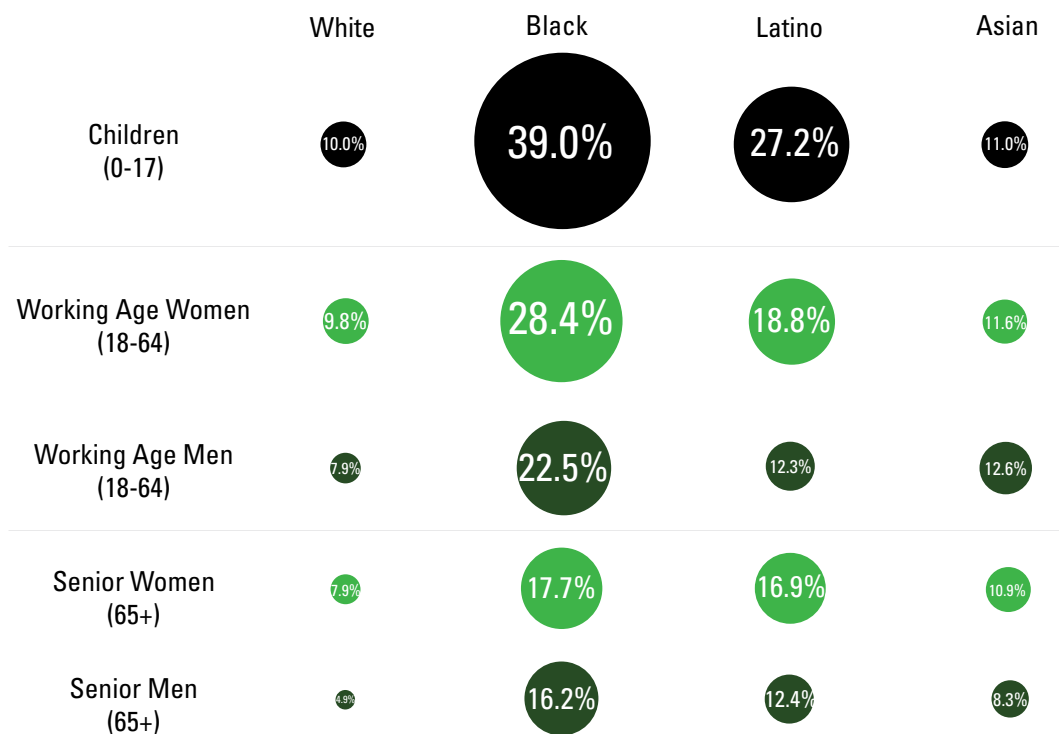
Federal Poverty Thresholds, 2015³

Family Size	Extreme Poverty (0-49% FPL)	Poverty (0-99% FPL)	Low Income (100-199% FPL)
1 person	\$6,041	\$12,082	\$24,164
2 people	\$7,696	\$15,391	\$30,782
3 people	\$9,436	\$18,871	\$37,742
4 people	\$12,129	\$24,257	\$48,514



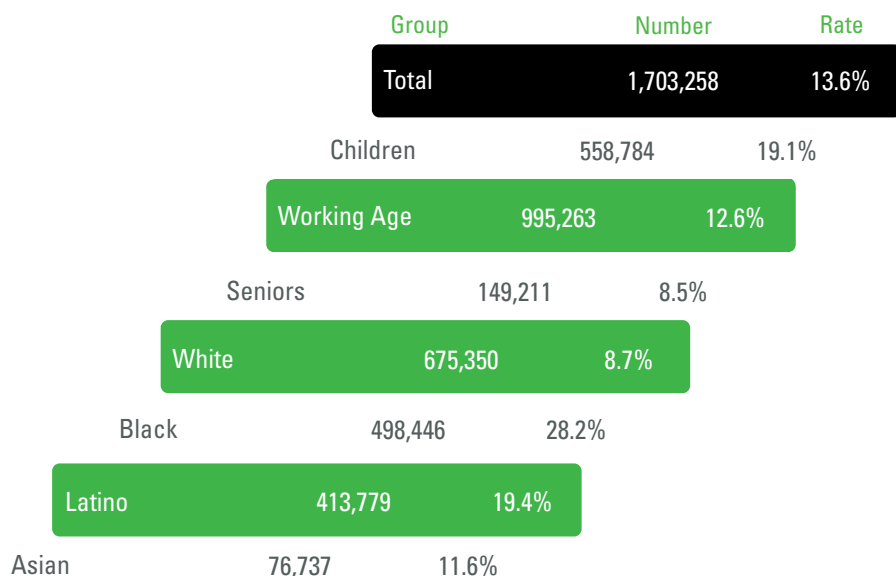
POPULATIONS IN POVERTY

Illinois Poverty by Race, Ethnicity, Age, and Gender, 2015 ⁴



This graphic displays the percentage of each demographic group that lives in poverty. For example, 39.0% percent of black children live in poverty.

Illinois Poverty by Race, Ethnicity, and Age, 2015 ⁵



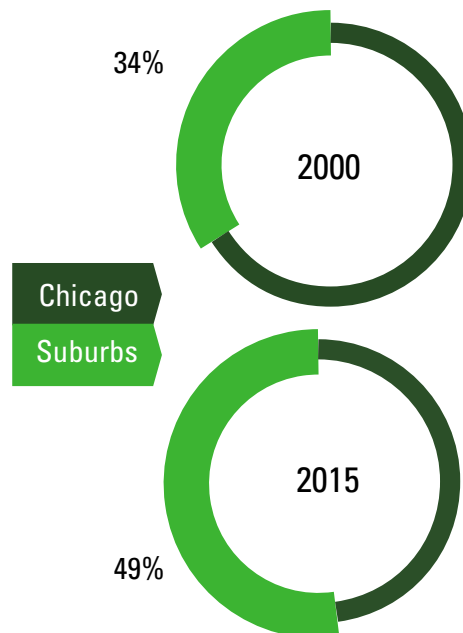


CHICAGO REGION

Chicago Region Poverty by County, 2015⁶

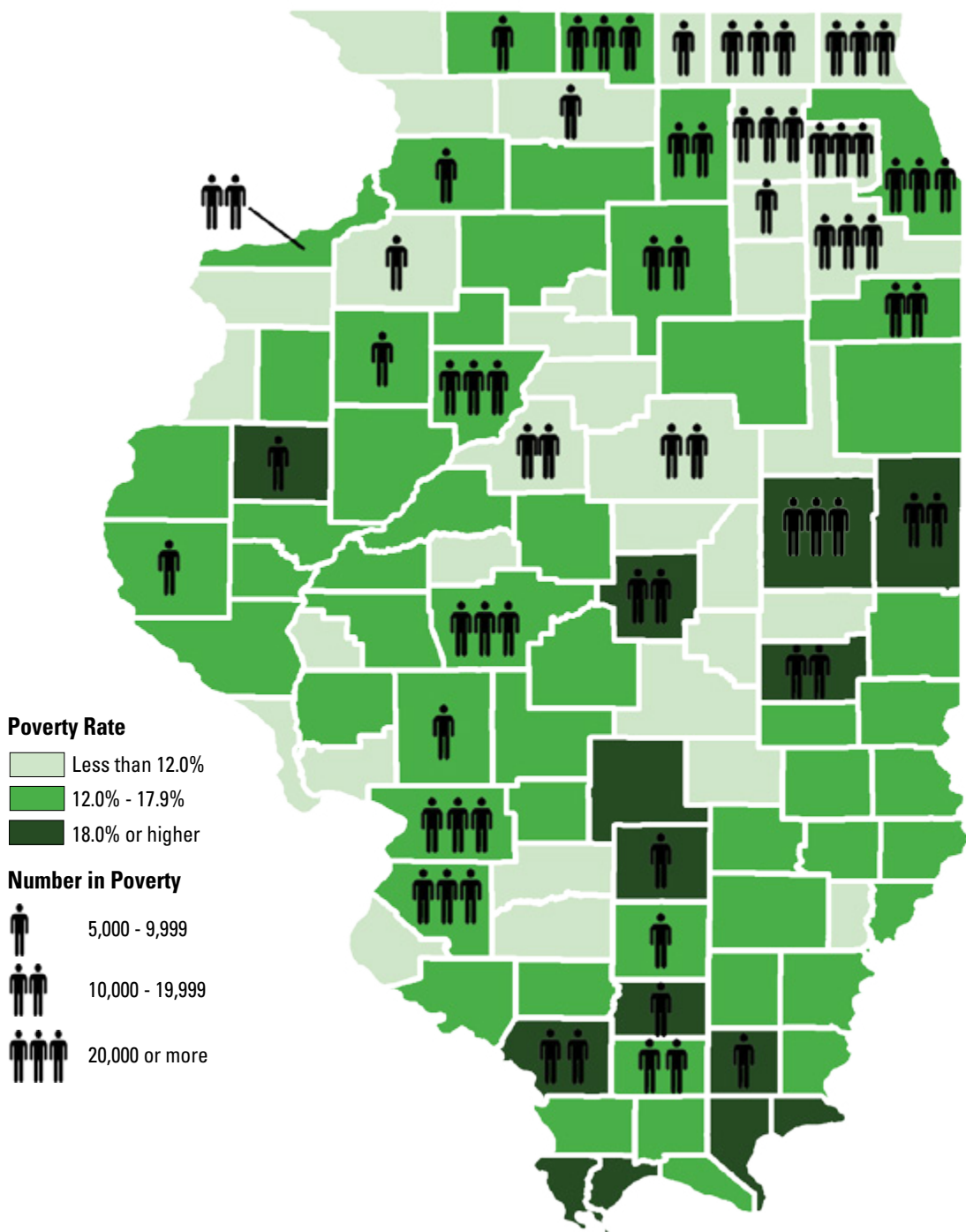
Geography	Extreme Poverty (0-49% FPL)	Poverty (0-99% FPL)	Low Income (100-199% FPL)
6-County Region	493,866 6.0%	1,098,665 13.3%	1,345,347 16.3%
Chicago	252,392 9.5%	556,134 20.9%	556,736 20.9%
Suburban Cook County	127,586 5.1%	275,946 11.1%	396,790 16.0%
Cook County	379,978 7.4%	832,080 16.1%	953,526 18.5%
DuPage County	33,903 3.7%	65,218 7.1%	104,734 11.4%
Kane County	22,463 4.3%	58,220 11.1%	78,319 14.9%
Lake County	24,263 3.5%	61,383 8.9%	88,250 12.9%
McHenry County	10,588 3.5%	28,119 9.2%	33,585 11.0%
Will County	22,671 3.3%	53,645 7.9%	86,933 12.8%

Share of Region's Poor in Suburbs, 2000 and 2015⁷





2015 COUNTY MAP





COUNTY WELL-BEING INDEX

The County Well-Being Index highlights counties that are experiencing particularly negative conditions and trends on four key indicators: poverty, unemployment, teen births, and high school graduation.

We evaluate counties using a point system, with a higher number of points indicating a worse score. A county receives a point if its rate is worse than the state average and/or if it has worsened since the previous year, for a total of 8 possible points.

Counties on the Poverty Watch list have an indicator score of 4 or 5 and need to be monitored, while counties on the Poverty Warning list have an indicator score of 6, 7, or 8 and need to initiate corrective action. This year, 30 out of 102 Illinois counties are on either the Poverty Watch or the Poverty Warning lists.

WATCH LISTS

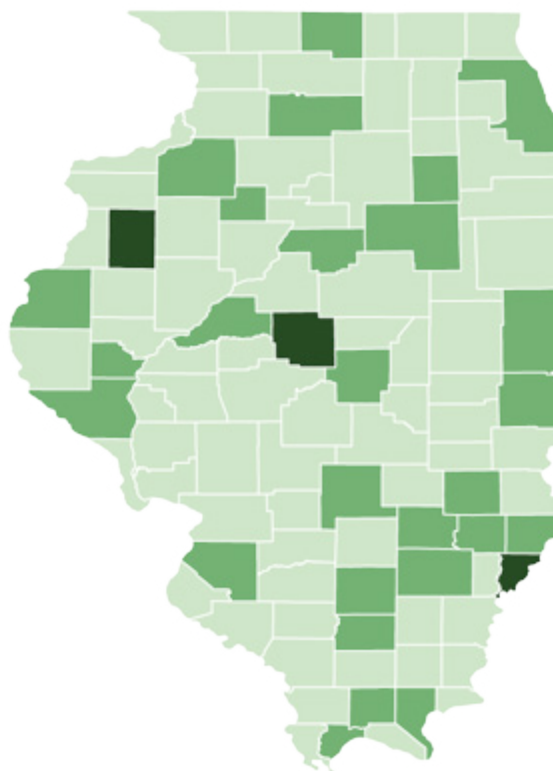
County has an indicator score of 4 or 5 and needs to be monitored.

- Brown
- Clay
- Cook
- Edgar
- Fayette
- Franklin
- Greene
- Grundy
- Hancock
- Henry
- Jasper
- Jefferson
- Johnson
- Lawrence
- Lee
- Livingston
- Macon
- Mason
- Pike
- Pope
- Pulaski
- Richland
- St. Clair
- Stark
- Vermilion
- Wayne
- Winnebago
- Woodford

WARNING LISTS

County has an indicator score of 6, 7, or 8 and needs to initiate corrective action.

- Logan
- Wabash
- Warren



Get county data from ILPovertyReport.org



VIOLENCE IN CHICAGO & ILLINOIS

Understanding trends in violence can be confusing: news about national or state trends might not make sense with what people are experiencing in their day-to-day lives, especially if they live in highly impacted areas. While, overall, violent crime has been on the decline in Illinois and nationwide over the past several decades, violence has also been concentrating in particular areas. People's experience of violence on the neighborhood level may be quite different from macro trends.

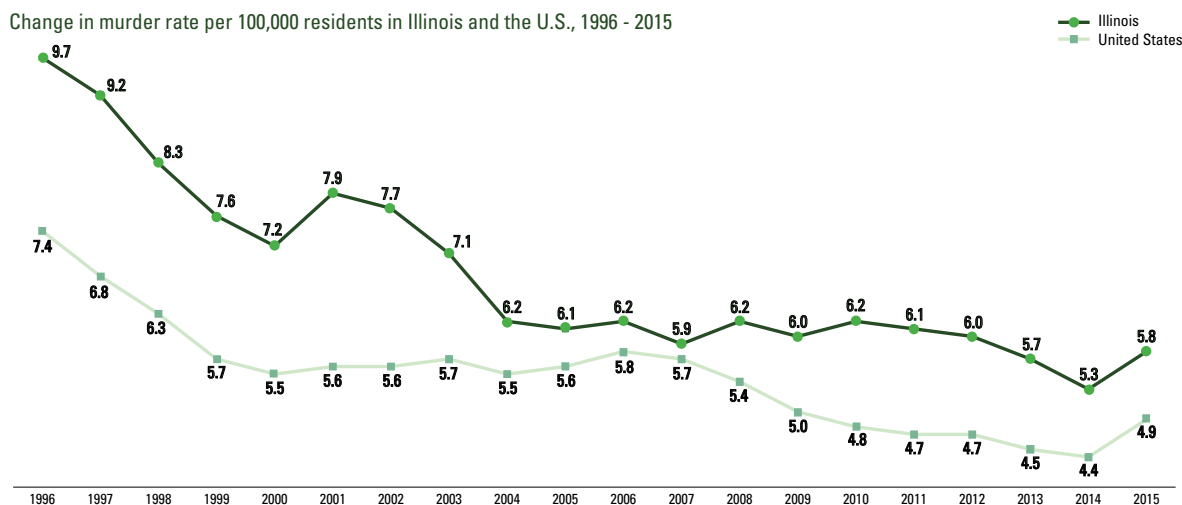


PREVALENCE OF TRENDS

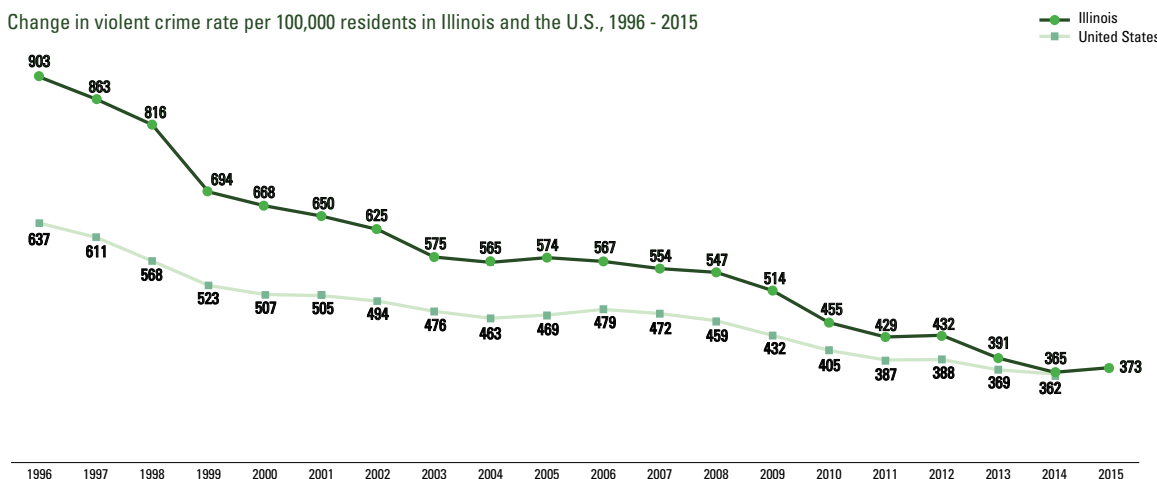
Violent crime rates (defined as murder, sexual assault/rape, robbery, and assault) have declined substantially in Illinois over the past several decades. Over the past 20 years, the violent crime rate in Illinois has fallen faster than the United States as a whole. While Illinois's violent crime rate was once much higher than the US, by 2015 it had fallen to nearly the same level as the US average.⁸

The murder rate in Illinois in 2015 still exceeded the US average, though by a smaller margin than in 1996. In 1996, 2.3 more people per 100,000 were murdered in Illinois than in the US, while in 2015, that difference was 0.9 people per 100,000. The US overall has decreased its murder rate at about the same rate as Illinois has. Between 1996 and 2015, the murder rate in the US fell by 34 percent, compared to a 40 percent decline in Illinois.⁹

Change in murder rate per 100,000 residents in Illinois and the U.S., 1996 - 2015



Change in violent crime rate per 100,000 residents in Illinois and the U.S., 1996 - 2015



Despite these years of declines, murder rates in Chicago have dramatically and suddenly risen in the past year, largely affecting a limited number of neighborhoods.¹⁰

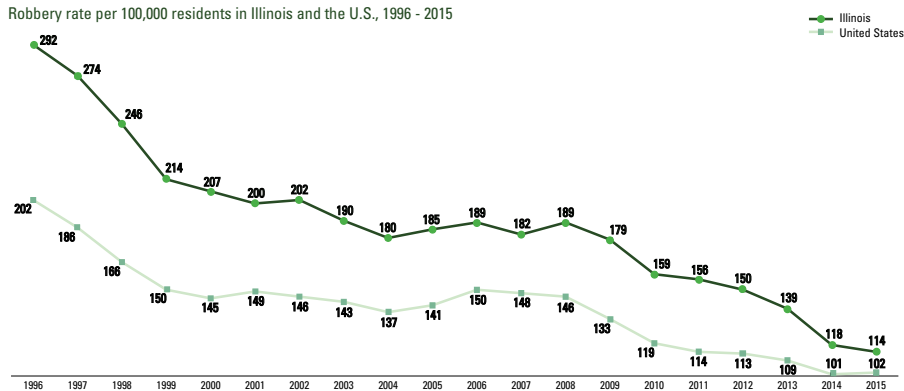
Between 2015 and 2016, murders in Chicago grew by 58 percent and non-fatal shootings grew by 43 percent.¹¹

Five neighborhoods—Austin, Englewood, New City, West Englewood, and Greater Grand Crossing—accounted for nearly half of the increase in murders between 2015 and 2016.¹² A staggering 764 people were murdered in Chicago in 2016. A much higher percentage of homicides in Chicago are committed with a gun than in other major cities—and while Chicago’s non-gun-related homicide rate is similar to rates in other major cities, Chicago’s gun homicide rate is significantly higher.¹³

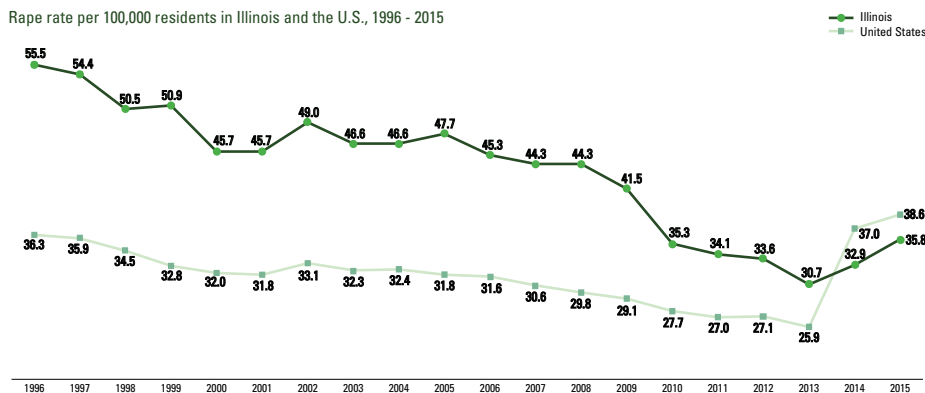




The difference between Illinois's and the US's robbery rates has narrowed over time. Nationwide, robbery rates declined by 50 percent from 201.9 per 100,000 in 1996 to 101.9 per 100,000 in 2015, while Illinois's rates per 100,000 declined by 61 percent from 291.8 in 1996 to 114.2 in 2015. While the robbery rate was 89.9 incidents per 100,000 higher in Illinois than nationwide in 1996, the difference in 2015 was just 12.3 incidents per 100,000.¹⁴



While Illinois's rate of rape exceeded the U.S.'s for many years, it fell below the U.S. rate in 2014. Illinois's rate of rapes per 100,000 people fell 35 percent from 55.5 in 1996 to 35.8 in 2015, while the U.S.'s grew by six percent over the same time period from 36.3 to 38.6.¹⁵ These estimates are vastly understated, since only one-third of rapes are reported to police nationwide.¹⁶



Reported incidents of domestic violence have declined in Illinois and nationwide, though continues to be distressingly common. Illinois's rate of domestic violence per 100,000 reported to police fell by 23 percent between 2002 and 2015,¹⁷ while nationwide, a survey of crime victims found that rates of domestic violence per 100,000 fell by 27 percent.¹⁸ This decline may not be reflective of the actual occurrence of domestic violence since many factors, such as relationship dynamics or faith in law enforcement, may affect whether the person experiencing domestic violence is willing or able to report incidents to police.

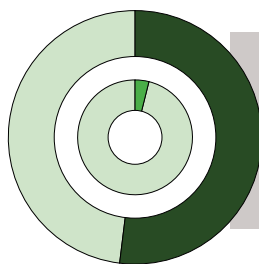


VIOLENCE DISPROPORTIONALLY IMPACTS COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

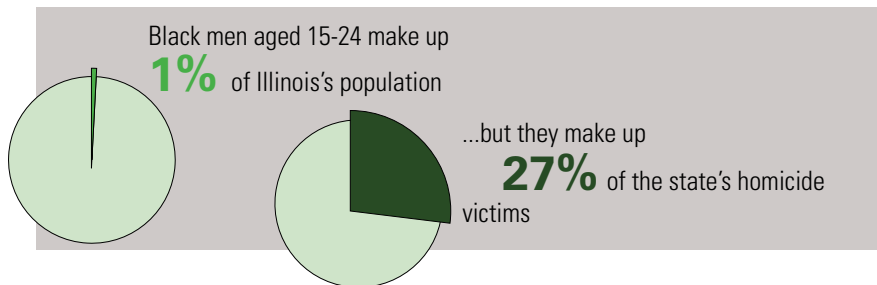
The havoc wreaked by violence falls disproportionately on certain groups—namely, people of color.

Black people, particularly young men, are the majority of victims of violence in Illinois and nationwide. Black men comprised nearly 2/3 of homicide victims in Illinois in 2015; 27 percent of homicide victims were black men aged 15 – 24, and another 28 percent of homicide victims were black men aged 25 – 44.¹⁹ In comparison, black men aged 15 – 24 are just 1 percent of the state population, while black men aged 25 – 44 are 2 percent of the Illinois population.²⁰ In Chicago, black men comprised almost 80 percent of homicide victims in 2016, compared to one-third of the city’s population. Over half of Chicago’s homicide victims in 2016 were black men aged 15 to 34, who comprise just four percent of the city population. Black people in Chicago are victims of nonfatal shootings at a rate that is more than twice as high as the citywide average and almost 70 times higher than whites.²¹

Women of color are disproportionately represented among those receiving domestic violence services in Illinois. Of survivors in Illinois, 29.3 percent were black and 22.9 percent were Latino in 2015.²² In comparison, black people represent only 14.3 percent of the state population and Latino represent 16.9 percent of the population.²³ Among survivors receiving services in Chicago, 41.3 percent were black and 43.2 percent were Latino, as compared to 31.1 percent and 28.9 percent of the population respectively.²⁴ While men and boys also experience domestic violence and receive services related to this form of violence, women comprise 86.3 percent of individuals who receive services related to domestic violence statewide.²⁵

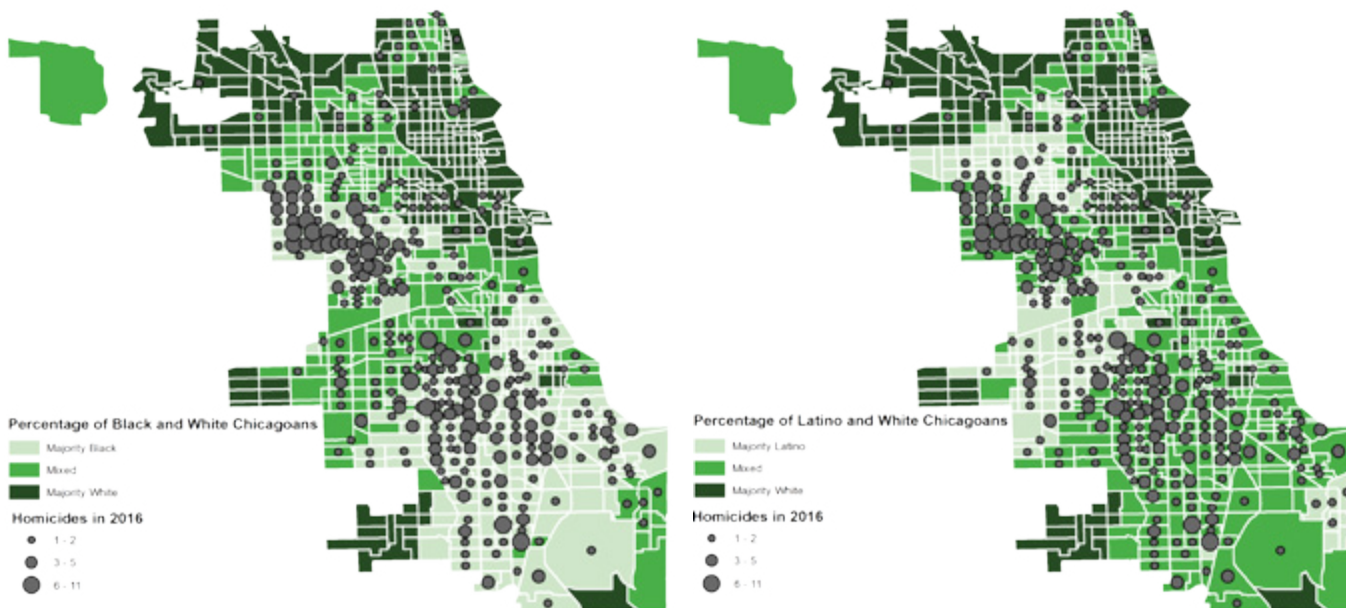


Black men aged 15-34 comprise **4%** of Chicago’s population, but made up **over half** of the city’s homicide victims in 2016.





HOMICIDES AND RACIAL/ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF CHICAGO, BY CENSUS TRACT²⁷



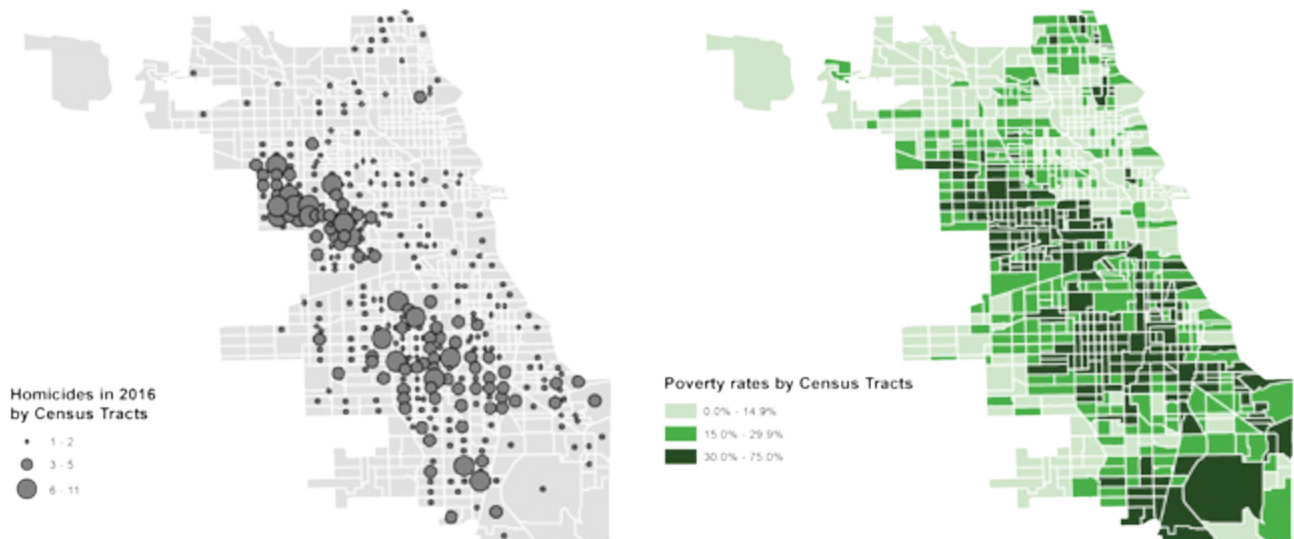


VIOLENCE & POVERTY

The conditions that perpetuate poverty and the conditions that foster violence often intersect and reinforce each other.

People living in poverty are more likely than people with higher incomes to become victims of violence. People with the lowest incomes (with household income less than \$10,000) nationwide experience a rate of violent victimization that is 206 percent higher than people with the highest incomes (with a household income of \$75,000 or greater). The disparity is even greater for serious violent crime (which includes rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault):²⁸ the rate of serious violent crime victimization for people with the lowest incomes is 293 percent higher than the serious crime victimization rate for people with the highest incomes.²⁹

HOMICIDES AND POVERTY RATES IN CHICAGO, BY CENSUS TRACT³⁰

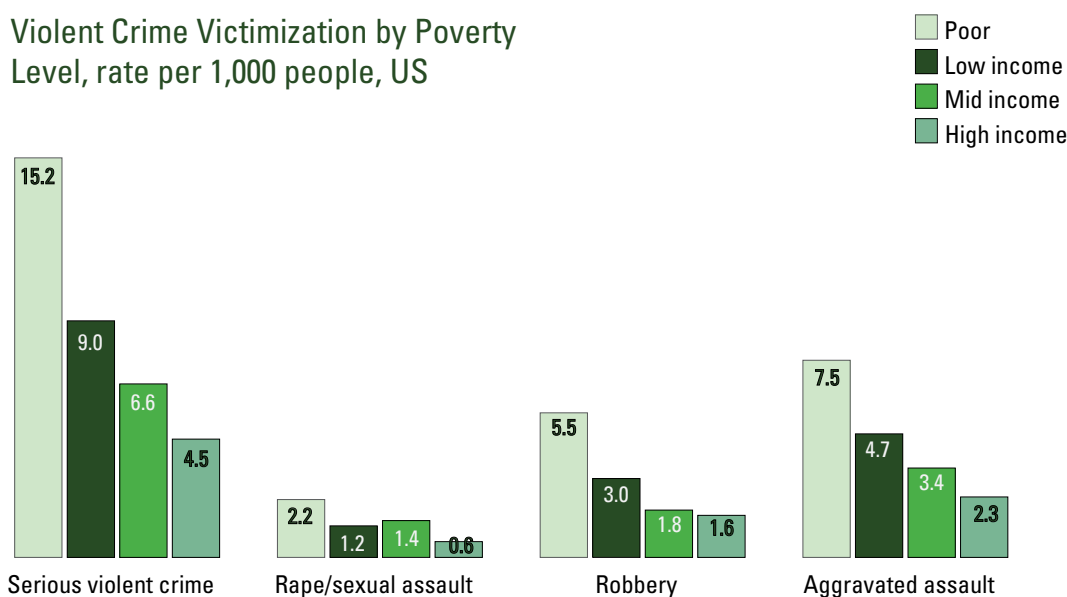




People living in poverty are much more likely to experience serious violent crime of any type nationwide. Between 2008 and 2012, the rate of rape/sexual assault victimization was 267 percent higher for people living in poverty than for people with high incomes, while the rate of robbery victimization is 244 percent higher and the aggravated assault victimization rate is 226 percent higher.³¹ The gun crime victimization rate for people living in poverty is 338 percent higher than the rate for people with high incomes, while the rate of non-gun-related violent crime victimization is 221 percent higher for people living in poverty than for people with high incomes.³²



Violent Crime Victimization by Poverty Level, rate per 1,000 people, US

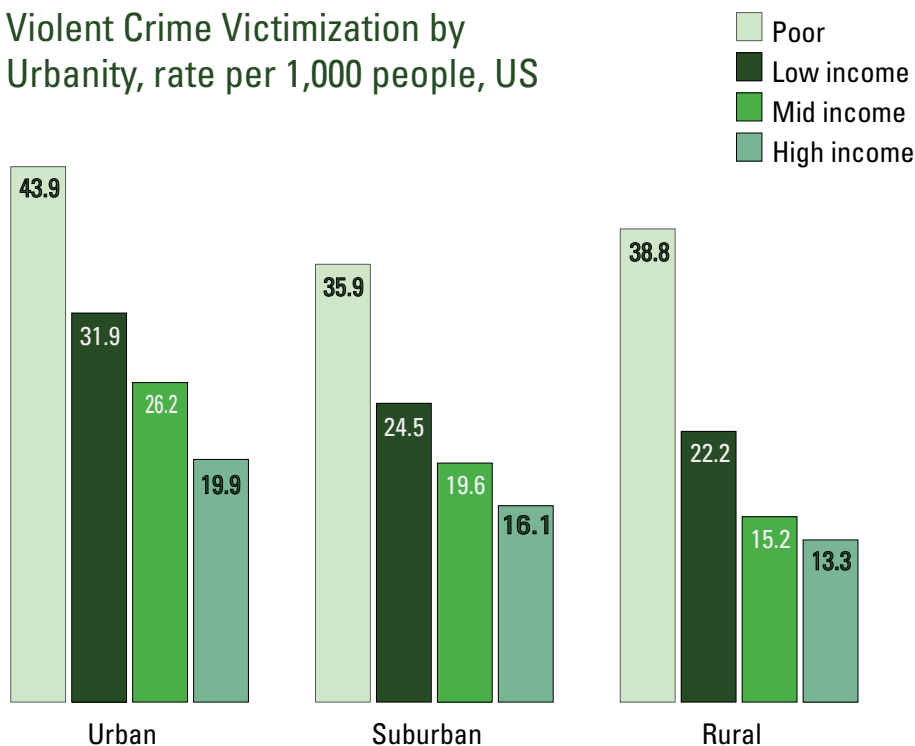


People living in poverty experience violence committed by strangers at a rate 75 percent higher than people with high incomes, and the income disparity in the violent crime victimization rate is even higher when the perpetrator of the crime is someone the victim knows. This may be due in part to the better resources higher-income people have to keep themselves safe, including faster police response times to higher-income neighborhoods³³ and the financial flexibility to leave dangerous living situations. People living in poverty experience intimate partner violence at a rate 286 percent higher than high-income people, while they experience crime committed by other family members at a rate 278 percent higher than people with high incomes and crime committed by friends/acquaintances at a rate 149 percent higher than people with high incomes.³⁴

Poor households nationwide experience violence at the highest rates, regardless of whether they're in urban, suburban, or rural areas. The largest income disparity in victimization rates is in rural areas—the rural poor experience violent crime at a rate 192 percent higher than high-income people in rural areas.³⁵ In rural areas, 23 percent of women reported being victims of domestic violence, compared to 16 percent of women in urban areas—and the violence experienced by rural women was more severe. For example, high rates of poverty in rural areas and less concentrated resources can make it difficult for people experiencing domestic violence to leave dangerous situations when they are financially dependent on their partner.³⁶ While poverty in rural and urban areas may look different, the challenges it poses are often similar—lack of resources and supports, inadequate transportation access, inability to connect with good jobs, social isolation, and more.



Violent Crime Victimization by Urbanity, rate per 1,000 people, US



A growing number of people are living in neighborhoods with highly concentrated poverty. These neighborhoods are likely to have older and poorly maintained buildings that increase children's exposure to lead; more vacant buildings that reduce neighborhood appeal and provide venues for illegal activity; difficulties attracting businesses and employment opportunities; and poorer schools that offer limited educational opportunities.³⁷ These are all conditions that contribute to elevated rates of violence.

In many ways, where you live determines the opportunities and threats that you face every day. Neighborhoods that struggle with disinvestment³⁸ and vacancy³⁹ often experience more violent crime. Neighborhood-level characteristics such as concentrated poverty and proximity to previous homicides are predictors of higher homicide rates, while the strength of neighborhood social ties and concentrated affluence have a protective effect against homicide. Differences in neighborhood access to social and economic resources play a large role in explaining homicide rates.⁴⁰

Violence takes a toll on opportunities available in neighborhoods as well. High rates of violent crime reduce the establishment of new businesses and slow the growth of existing businesses.⁴¹ Property values fall in areas with high levels of violent crime.⁴² The disinvestment and deterioration associated with violence feeds into a cycle of poverty, lack of opportunity, and crime, making it hard for neighborhoods to recover.



Growth in number of poor people living in extreme poverty neighborhoods in Chicago between 2000 and 2008 – 2012:⁴³

384%





VIOLENCE & TRAUMA

The long-term consequences of violence can have ripple effects throughout a person's life and the community where they live. Witnessing and/or being a victim of violence can result in trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder.⁴⁴ Trauma can manifest itself in many ways depending on the individual and the situation, but common impacts include denial, seeming stunned or dazed, hyperarousal/sensitivity to threats and aggression, perceiving that the world is a dangerous place, dependency, hyperactivity, and irrationality.⁴⁵ The negative mental health impact of violence worsens with more exposure to violence.⁴⁶ Witnessing violence is associated more with anger and externalizing responses, while experiencing violence is associated with depression and internalizing responses.⁴⁷ These responses, if unaddressed, can negatively impact people's lives in many ways, from difficulty achieving in school and finding and keeping a job, to increasing the likelihood of violent and aggressive behavior. In this way, untreated trauma feeds the cycle of poverty and violence in highly impacted communities.

The traumatic effects of violence exposure do not happen only in urban areas; rural youth also exhibit traumatic symptoms after exposure to violence. In one study, rural youth exposed to gun violence reported significantly more symptoms of anger, dissociation, post-traumatic stress, and trauma. They also reported significantly higher levels of violent behaviors than those not exposed to violence.⁴⁸

Other common symptoms of trauma that feed directly into the cycle of violence are aggressive behavior and hyperarousal (a cluster of symptoms that include heightened anxiety, irritability, hypervigilance, jumpiness, difficulty falling asleep, and difficulty concentrating). Several Chicago and national studies have found that common responses to violence exposure include stronger retaliatory beliefs, difficulty controlling aggressive behavior, and the use of physical aggression.⁴⁹ Exposure to community violence can normalize the use of aggression as a way to solve problems among youth, who may come to see violence as an appropriate behavior, be hyperaware of threats, and become more likely to ascribe hostile intent to benign behavior.⁵⁰ One study found that youth experiencing high trauma were two times more likely to be chronic weapons carriers than those who were not.⁵¹ The biological response to trauma lends insight into why it may lead to aggressive behavior: the stress response becomes overstimulated, while the brain struggles to extinguish fear responses and becomes increasingly sensitive to stress. These neurological processes interfere with memory processing and the ability to exhibit self-control, reasoning, problem-solving, and planning.⁵²

Women and men experience trauma in different ways. Paying attention to women's experience with trauma is critical because women are victims of violence at a higher rate than men; in the U.S. in 2015, 21.1 women of every 1,000 were victims of violence, compared to 15.9 out of 1,000 men.⁵³ Additionally, women are more likely to exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in response to traumatic events. It is unclear whether this is because men experience these symptoms to a smaller degree or they do not report them.⁵⁴ Generally speaking, experiences of trauma disrupt relationships and an underlying trust in one's social environment and world.⁵⁵ The specific experience of violence or a history of traumatic experiences can impact the experience of traumatic symptoms and recovery.⁵⁶ Studies have found that women are more likely to use dissociation and isolation to cope with trauma, whereas men are more likely to externalize and exhibit aggressive behavior.⁵⁷

VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE PER 1,000



People who survive domestic violence are similarly at risk of trauma and negative health outcomes. Complicating experiences of trauma and recovery, a survivor's safety may continue to be at risk after experiencing domestic violence.⁵⁸ Further, a survivor may find her social support system is comprised of her abuser or others that may not be supportive of her wishes.⁵⁹ In this regard, a survivor may face difficult choices if she wishes to maintain her community.⁶⁰ Research has shown that survivors of domestic violence have a greater likelihood of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorders, self-harm, suicide, and other mood disorders.⁶¹

VIOLENCE, RACE & THE ROLE OF OUR JUSTICE SYSTEM



As we've shown, people of color are disparately impacted by violence and poverty. The roots of these inequities are embedded in our history and continue to manifest in our institutions and attitudes to this day. In an attempt to shed light on the historical impact of systemic racism on violence rather than perpetuate a dangerous and racist narrative that puts the blame squarely on people of color, we include this breakout section to provide context about how generations of deprivation, oppression, and violence against people of color lay the groundwork for conditions that perpetuate violence today.



AN ONGOING LEGACY OF VIOLENCE & OPPRESSION

Along with policies and practices that create economic disadvantage for communities of color, violence has played a key role in our country's legacy of oppression. Our system of government is built on a foundation of depriving people of color of their rights and controlling people of color through violence. The regime of slavery was upheld through violence at the hands of slave owners and the law, laying the groundwork for a long history of discrimination, violence, and oppression at the hands of our government and society at large. Native Americans were violently expelled from their land and slaughtered from the first contact with white explorers. Racial violence from white mobs was widespread during Reconstruction, targeting black people in voting booths, churches, and their homes.⁶² Between the Civil War and World War II, thousands of black people and hundreds of Mexican, Chinese, and Native American people were lynched in public displays of racial hatred.⁶³ Violence continued throughout the Civil Rights era and beyond, including attacks on civil rights activists and the bombing of black churches throughout the South.

Communities of color continue to be targeted by hate crimes, including a recent uptick in violence since November. In the month following the 2016 presidential election, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported over 1,000 reports of harassment and intimidation, including 31 in Illinois. The most common type of incident, comprising nearly a third of all incidents, were motivated by anti-immigrant sentiment, often targeted at Latinos or Asians. Another 20 percent were anti-black hate incidents, while 10 percent were anti-Muslim, and 10 percent were anti-LGBT.⁶⁴ Hate crimes against black people comprised more than two-thirds of all race-based hate crimes in Illinois in 2015, and nearly half of all hate crimes in Illinois in 2015.⁶⁵ Official hate crime counts underestimate the actual number of hate crimes—it is estimated that two-thirds of hate crimes go unreported to police. This happens both because victims may not choose to report the crime to police, and it is not always possible to document that bias motivated the crime in question.⁶⁶

A major consequence of this shameful past and ongoing legacy is that generations of people of color were denied the same opportunities and rights as whites, creating a cycle of entrenched racial inequity that persists today. Generations of people were also exposed to the destructive myth that black people are frightening and dangerous, and must be held under control through violence. While the racial association may be more coded today, we continue to portray criminal “bad guys” as black people—namely, black men. Studies show that people tend to associate the concept of “crime” with black male faces.⁶⁷ Demonizing black men as dangerous criminals who we fear makes it easier for society to dismiss concerns about the diminished opportunities they face, the danger they confront in their own neighborhoods, and their violent treatment at the hands of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.



THE TROUBLING ROLE OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The American justice system has long been a tool for violence against communities of color. From the 1866 race riots in Memphis and New Orleans where city police and a white mob attacked black citizens, to the Central Park Five, to the shootings of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Rekia Boyd, and others, the United States has a long history of law enforcement abuse of people of color. Chicago in particular has a past rife with police abuse, notably under the police commander Jon Burge, who tortured suspects to coerce confessions using electro-shock, placing bags over suspects' heads, threatening them with guns, beatings, psychological torture, and more.⁶⁸ Police violence against people of color harms the victims mentally⁶⁹ and physically (sometimes to the point of loss of life) and degrades faith in the law enforcement system, ultimately undermining public safety.

VIOLENCE IN THE CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

A white Chicago police officer fatally shot a black teenager, Laquan McDonald, in 2014. Chicagoans were horrified as we watched McDonald shot a chilling 16 times as he walked away from police officers, and distraught to see that officers did not offer aid as he lay dying in the street. The incident garnered national attention.

In January 2017, the Department of Justice released a report finding that the Chicago Police Department (CPD) violated the fourth amendment of the Constitution in its systematic use of excessive force. The DOJ found serious deficiencies in the CPD's training, reporting, investigation, and accountability systems. The CPD had not made clear to officers how and when to use appropriate amounts of force, resulting in poor practices like chases that end in shootings, shooting at vehicles without justification, and using deadly force when suspects presented no immediate threat. The DOJ also found that officers had engaged in racially discriminatory conduct that impacts their application of force. Officers were often able to get away with these poor practices with little to no repercussions. In addition, officers experience significant stress on the job and have few supports to help them process their trauma, which ultimately impedes their ability to do their jobs.

The report notes that, in order for Chicago to find short- and long-term solutions to make neighborhoods heavily impacted by violence safe, "it is imperative that the City rebuild trust between CPD and the people it serves, particularly in these communities." While the City has started to take steps to address the systematic problems raised in the report, such as creating a citizen police accountability board and instituting new transparency policies regarding the release of videos and investigation materials, there is a long way to go to making meaningful reforms that will protect Chicagoans' human rights, improve public safety, and rebuild trust.

Source: *Investigation of the Chicago Police Department*, available [here](#)



CRIMINAL JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT

This history of violence is punctuated by the reality that today the criminal justice system disproportionately applies negative consequences to people of color at every step in the process. This involvement with the criminal justice system creates real barriers for individuals and families to connect with employment, housing, and opportunity, perpetuating poverty in many communities that have historically received some of the fewest resources. From arraignment to sentencing to imprisonment to parole, people of color are disproportionately likely to enter the criminal justice system and face harsher penalties once they are in it:⁷⁰

- Even though black and white people use marijuana at similar rates, black people are much more likely to get arrested for possession; in Illinois, blacks are **seven and a half times more likely** to get arrested for marijuana possession.⁷¹
- Black men in the federal court system receive sentences that are **20 percent longer** than those on white men who are convicted of comparable crimes.⁷²
- As of 2009, black people comprised **13 percent** of the U.S. population but made up **56.4 percent** of those serving life without parole and **56.1 percent** of those serving life without parole for offenses committed as a juvenile.⁷³

The prison population in Illinois has grown by 350 percent between 1980 and 2014.⁷⁴ The ratio of black-to-white people who are incarcerated in Illinois is 8.8 : 1, and 1.6 : 1 for Latino-to-white. Illinois has the 9th largest black-white disparity in the country.⁷⁵ Black youth are detained at the highest rates in Illinois.⁷⁶ Black youths were detained at a rate of 388 per 100,000 people in 2013. Overall, youths in Illinois are detained at a rate of 134 per 100,000 people.⁷⁷ In Chicago, an estimated 43 percent of black men—45,000 people—are “missing” due to incarceration or early death, leaving behind families and communities with reduced earning potential, missing caretakers, and grief.⁷⁸

8.8 : 1

**RATIO OF BLACK-TO-WHITE PEOPLE
INCARCERATED IN ILLINOIS**

1.6 : 1

**RATIO OF LATINO-TO-WHITE PEOPLE
INCARCERATED IN ILLINOIS**



Having a parent who is incarcerated has negative impacts on children's lives. Parental incarceration has had a notable role in increasing child poverty rates, particularly in communities of color,⁷⁹ and raises the risk of child homelessness by more than double, particularly for black children.⁸⁰ The parent's absence results in serious financial hardships for their children's caregiver(s).⁸¹ Black children in Illinois are 3.5 times more likely to have at least one parent who was incarcerated during their lifetime than white children. In Illinois, 14% of black children have at least one parent who was incarcerated compared to 4 percent of white children.⁸² At the same time, 2 in 5 black children in Illinois live in poverty.⁸³

If a person becomes incarcerated, time spent detained in prison or jail can exacerbate poverty by putting housing, jobs, and child custody at risk; additionally, parents who owe child support often accrue child support debt while they are detained, with little to no income to contribute towards it. Other debts, like probation or parole supervision fees, court costs, and fines, accrue in prison as well.⁸⁴

Throughout the country and in Illinois, people with a criminal record face a convoluted and far-reaching system of legal barriers, including eligibility for jobs and licenses, volunteer opportunities, housing, and immigration status. Many barriers are permanent—limiting rights and opportunities decades after a conviction. All told, there are over 48,000 of these "collateral consequences" throughout the United States.⁸⁵

Ostensibly, the tens of thousands of laws that limit opportunity for people with criminal records are meant to protect the public. But many of these barriers are not backed by data, but by politics and public perception. Most barriers, in fact, are without a solid evidentiary basis.⁸⁶ More and more, we are realizing that the harsh barriers to employment, housing, benefits, and civic participation that we have created do little to protect public safety; instead they drive poverty and foster the conditions that perpetuate violence.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

The United States' use of solitary confinement violates international human rights standards.⁸⁷ People in solitary confinement are generally held in small cells for 22 – 23 hours a day with highly restricted contact with other people. Solitary confinement can be seriously damaging to the mental and physical health of people who are incarcerated. Extended stays in solitary confinement can exacerbate prior mental health conditions, cause trauma, self-mutilation, and suicide attempts, and result in behavior that creates an extensive disciplinary record.⁸⁸ Prison officials in Illinois can keep people in solitary for weeks and years at a time. In April of 2016, nearly 2,000 people incarcerated in Illinois were in solitary confinement for disciplinary or safety-related reasons.

ABUSES AGAINST PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

There are widespread reports nationwide of excessive use of force by prison staff against people with mental illness. People with mental illness are particularly vulnerable in prison and often suffer greater rates of assault. At the same time, insufficient mental health services within prisons exacerbate symptoms and there is poor training of prison staff on how to best interact with people experiencing mental health crises.⁸⁹

SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL ASSULT

The United Nations Committee Against Torture has voiced serious concerns about the inability of US prisons to protect people who are incarcerated from sexual violence.⁹⁰ There were over 200,000 reports of sexual victimization in U.S. adult correctional facilities in 2008.⁹¹ A significant portion of these assaults are committed by prison staff.

One in five people who are incarcerated report being victims of assault in prison.⁹² As with other kinds of violence, people who have been physically or sexually assaulted in prison exhibit traumatic responses such as anger, fear (especially following assaults from staff), depression, and difficulty sleeping.⁹³

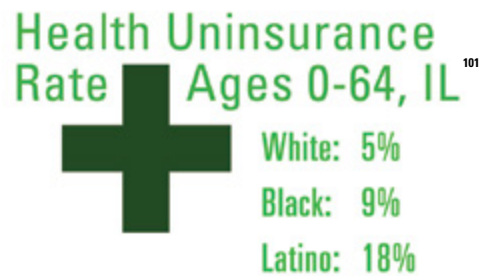
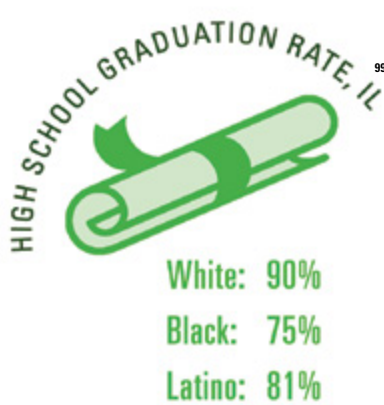
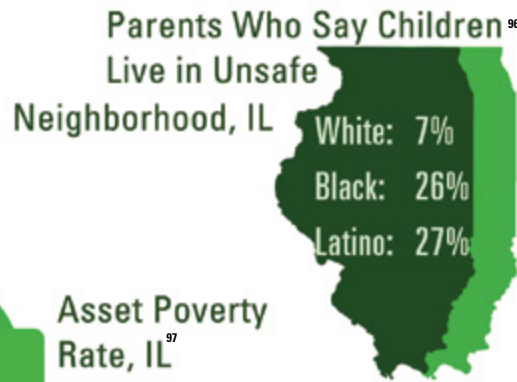
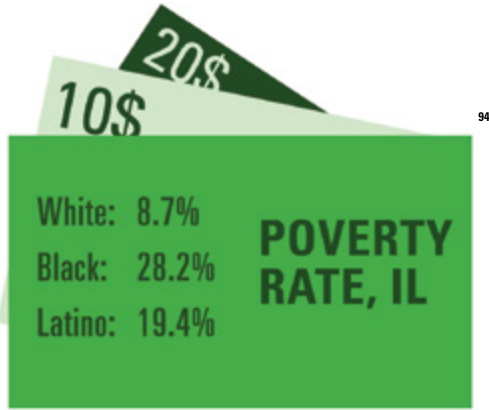


QUALITY OF LIFE CONDITIONS

Violence and poverty often flourish under the same circumstances, including lack of access to jobs, inadequate investment in public services, poor health conditions, lack of educational opportunities, and more. This section highlights how Illinois is doing at addressing these underlying quality of life conditions—and shows that we have a long way to ensure that every Illinoisan has an adequate standard of living, free from poverty and violence.



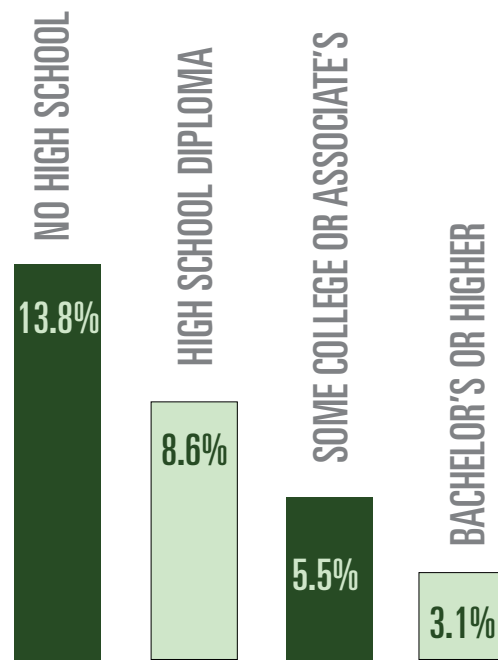
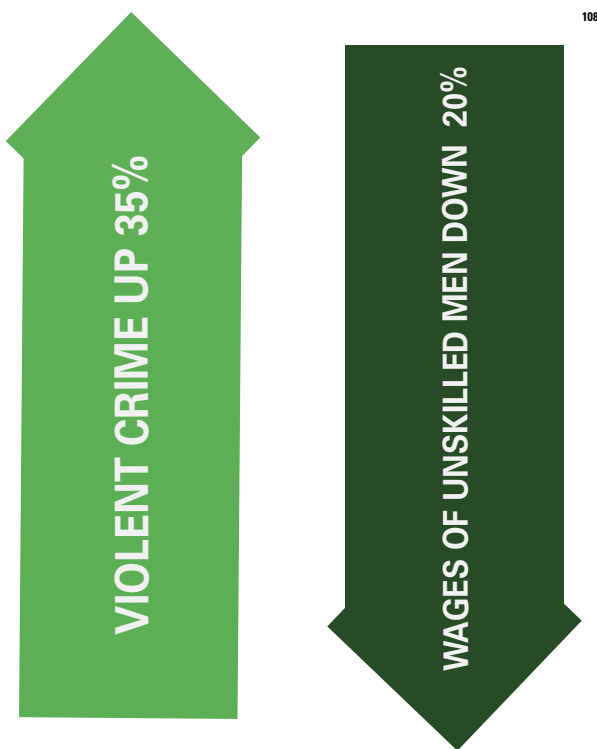
OVERVIEW





JOBS & INCOME

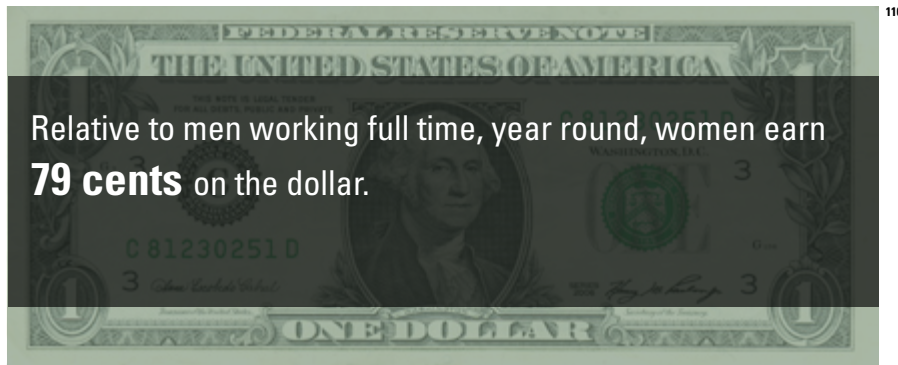
Employment, jobs, and income intersect with the cycle of poverty, violence, and trauma at many points. Wage declines explain a significant portion of increases in violent crime rates, while increasing wages reduces the amount of time spent on criminal activity.¹⁰² Experiencing violence can lead to trauma that interferes with employment. Survivors of domestic violence, in particular, face employment challenges, both due to trauma as well as abuse.¹⁰³ Domestic violence survivors have a decreased likelihood of escaping poverty,¹⁰⁴ have high unemployment rates,¹⁰⁵ and experience traumatic symptoms that make it hard to maintain employment.¹⁰⁶ The inability to get and keep good-paying jobs is a major cause of poverty. In 2015, 48.5 percent of domestic violence survivors in Illinois reported a monthly income of \$500 or less and 65.3 percent were either employed part-time or not employed.¹⁰⁷



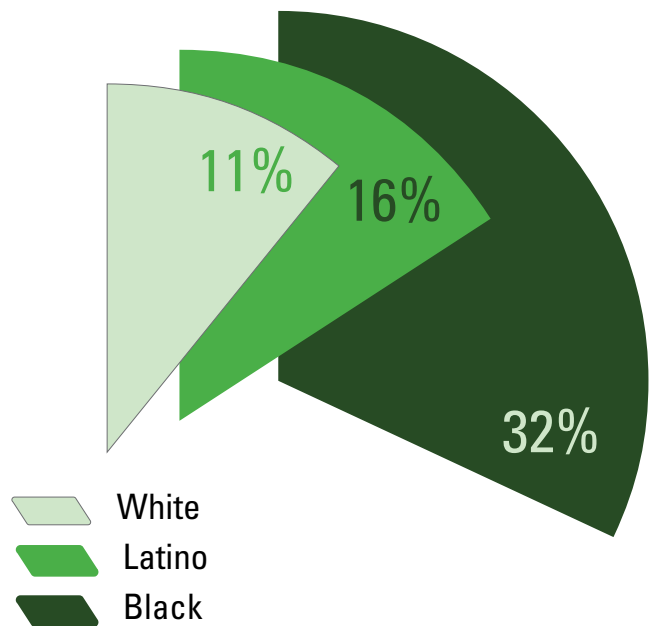
Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, IL ¹¹²



JOBS & INCOME



Adolescent victimization reduces the odds of employment in later adulthood by 51% ¹⁰⁹



Unemployment Rate for 16-24 Year Olds, IL ¹¹¹



EDUCATION

Violence prevents children from achieving their full educational potential. Children who are victims of violent crime struggle to achieve in school, and the effect worsens as they are exposed to more violence.¹¹³ Experiencing violence has negative effects on children’s academic achievement,¹¹⁴ including lower reading levels, lower test performance, and IQ scores.¹¹⁵ Trauma has been shown to have significant, long-term effects on brain development and IQ, especially experienced before age two, even holding constant gender, race, and socioeconomic variables.¹¹⁶ Failing to address the long-term causes of violence and trauma sets the learning process back for entire communities of young people. Compounding these struggles are the inadequate resources dedicated to education in the lowest-income school districts.

The overall **graduation rate** for students at high schools in Illinois is **85.5%** female students have a five-percentage point higher graduation rate than male students.

¹¹⁸

Meets or exceeds standardized tests expectation in 3rd grade.^{119, 120}

English Language Arts

Math



3rd grade



The Illinois school districts with the **highest** poverty rates receive

27% less in funding per student

than districts with the **lowest** poverty rates.¹²¹



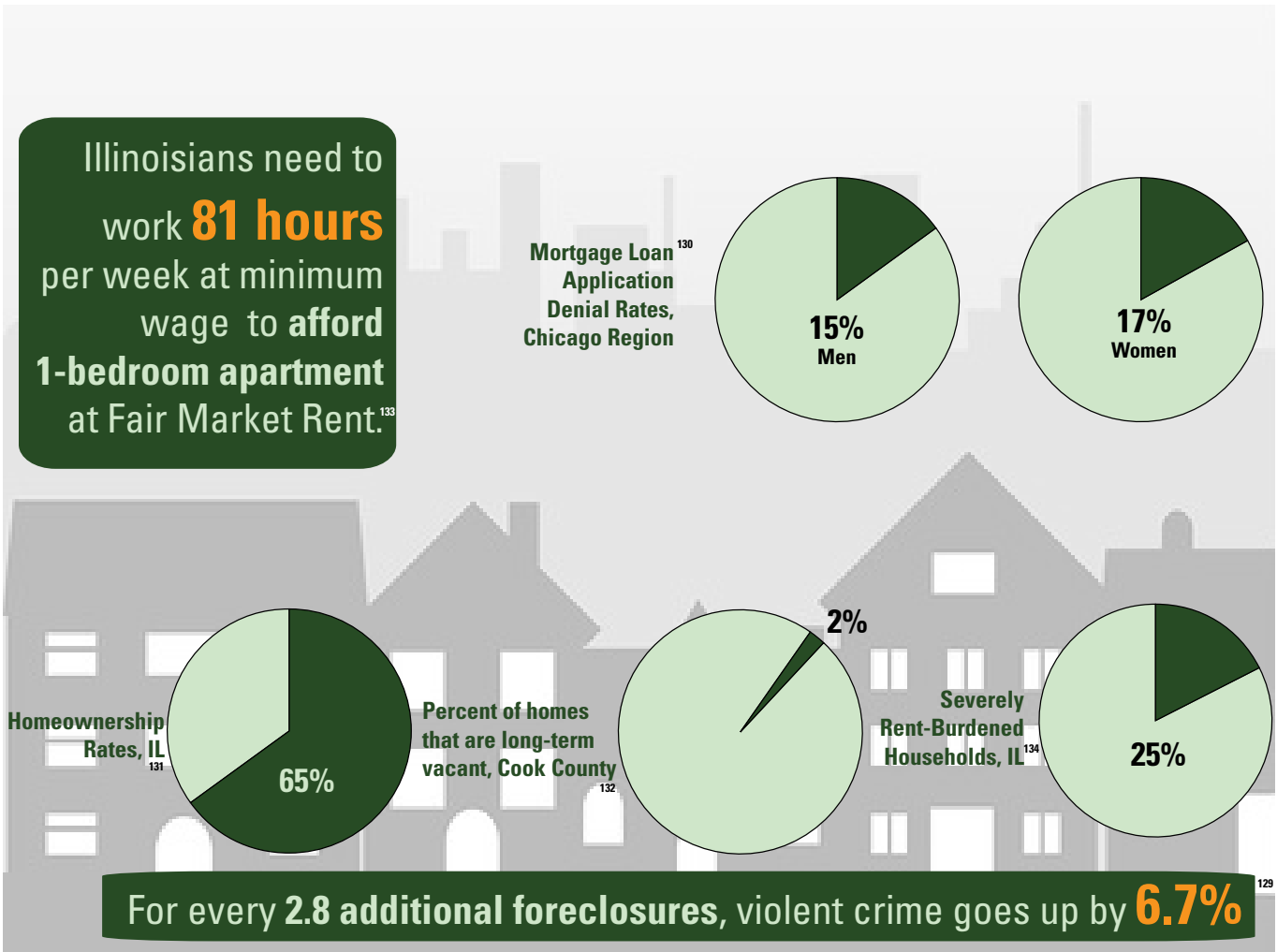
A child in the 90th percentile for trauma and violence exposure would be expected to have 9.8 fewer points in reading achievement and 7.5 fewer IQ points.¹¹⁷



HOUSING

Chicago is one of the nation’s most segregated cities and has been for decades.¹²² The legacy of centuries of racially discriminatory policies (i.e. redlining) and practices are still evidenced in the city today. Communities of color were hit hardest by the foreclosure crisis,¹²³ and foreclosures and vacancy are associated with higher rates of violent crime.¹²⁴ The city has dealt with persistent economic segregation as well; poor Chicago neighborhoods tend to stay poor over long periods of time, despite major macroeconomic and political changes.¹²⁵ This cross-generational, persistent inequality in the distribution of resources and opportunities (driven in no small part by discriminatory housing policies) across racial and economic lines means that certain communities are facing the long-term conditions that foster violence more than others. And this is not only a problem for the worst-off communities—cities with high degrees of inequality are more unsafe overall than integrated cities.¹²⁶

Historically, survivors of domestic violence have experienced discrimination in a number of housing practices, including ‘nuisance ordinances’ that may allow for the eviction of a survivor for calling the police or other emergency services.¹²⁷ In 2016, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published a rule allowing a survivor of domestic violence may file a discrimination complaint if they were denied or evicted from housing as a result of domestic violence.¹²⁸



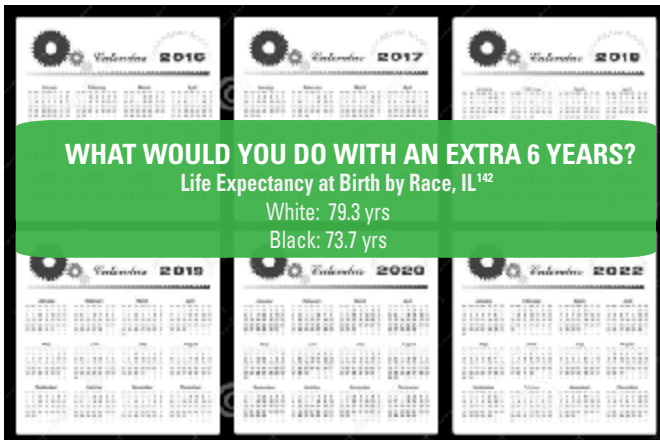
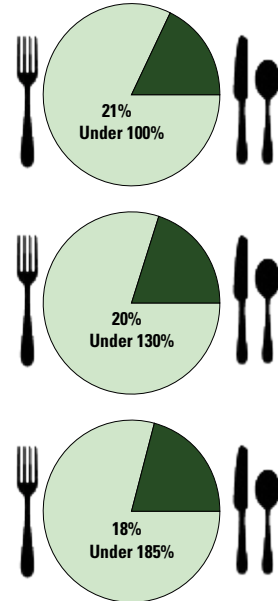


HEALTH & NUTRITION

Poor health conditions disparately impact people living in poverty and can influence the prevalence of violence—and violence exacerbates poor health. Children who live in poverty are more likely to be exposed to lead in their homes,¹³⁵ and this increased exposure to lead in childhood is associated with higher crime rates.¹³⁶ One study estimates that reducing the average blood lead level in preschool children by one microgram would result in nearly 2,500 fewer robberies, almost 54,000 fewer aggravated assaults, over 4,100 fewer rapes, and over 700 fewer murders nationwide per year.¹³⁷

The trauma that comes from violence can have negative effects on physical health. Trauma is associated with higher risk of arthritis and diabetes for men, and digestive disorders and cancer for women.¹³⁸ Survivors of violence are more likely to develop alcohol and substance use disorders,¹³⁹ which then raises the risk of experiencing violence again.¹⁴⁰

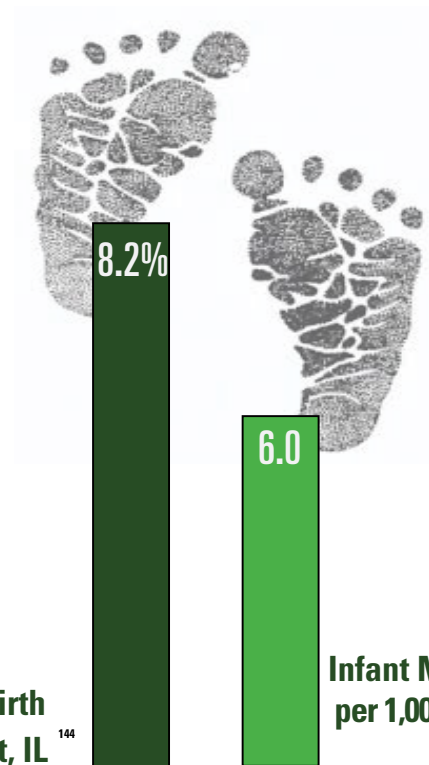
Child food insecurity by ratio of household income to poverty level, US¹⁴³



\$1,800,000,000



Total estimated cost of lead-linked crime nationwide¹⁴¹



CHANGING THE CONDITIONS



It is tempting to look for quick fixes to address violence—especially because the stakes are often life or death. But quick fixes alone will not address the long-standing drivers of poverty and violence. While we need to stem the tide of the immediate crisis that we face, we also cannot ignore the long-term conditions that foster violence and poverty. To change the conditions spelled out in the pages of this report and playing out daily in communities across the state, a spectrum of best practice approaches is needed including prevention, rapid response, intervention, enforcement, healing and rehabilitation, and reentry.

Many of the conversations about violence have centered on the law enforcement portion of the spectrum. Our focus in this report, the cycle of risk, requires that we also look at longer-term solutions that address underlying causes of violence and set the stage for sustainable change. Relying on law enforcement to the exclusion of community investment runs the risk of deepening the racial disparities that exist as a result of systematic issues in policing and criminal justice. Further, expanding policing and lengthening sentences exposes those in prison to human rights violations, perpetuates the inequities of our justice system, and reduces job and housing opportunities at reentry. In order to make long-lasting change, we must address the often elusive drivers of violence—especially poverty—and be willing to invest the time and resources to make enduring, structural change.

So how can a broader spectrum of responses to violence become a reality in Illinois? For years, Illinois has eroded support for critical services that address these underlying conditions and created structural barriers to opportunity for many struggling individuals and families. Through an anti-poverty lens, we recommend that an array of policy solutions from criminal justice reform to investing in evidence-based solutions such as education, health, jobs, and housing can make Illinois a safer place—for everyone. It requires attention, investment, and focus.



HEALTH

Health care services play an important role in preventing, identifying and intervening in violence. Identifying current or past interpersonal and domestic violence can help prevent further abuse and lead to improved health status. Health care is most successful in this when people at risk have consistent access to quality, comprehensive care that they can afford.

- Protect **Medicaid** and the **Affordable Care Act**. These programs help ensure all children and adults have access to preventative screenings, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, maternity care, and a broad range of other critical health benefits.
- Use existing state flexibility to expand the breadth of **behavioral health services** available through Medicaid. Supportive housing services, substance use disorder treatment, reentry services for returning citizens, and intensive services for youth experiencing psychosis for the first time can all be provided through Medicaid.
- Invest in **evidence-based mental health treatment**, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, to address trauma and teach skills for addressing conflict in non-violent ways.

EDUCATION

Investing in policies and programs that encourage educational achievement could have major effects on violence reduction. Experts estimate that increasing the average level of male schooling by one year reduces the homicide rate by 29 percent¹⁴⁶ and violent crime by 30 percent;¹⁴⁷ increasing the male high school graduation rate by 5 percent would save almost \$5 billion per year in crime-related expenses nationwide;¹⁴⁸ an additional year of schooling reduces the likelihood of going to prison by 0.1 percentage points for whites and 0.4 percentage points for blacks;¹⁴⁹ and adding a recreation center to a disinvested neighborhood leads to a decrease in violent crime of 2.3 crimes per 1,000 people.¹⁵⁰ High-quality early childhood education is also associated with crime reduction.¹⁵¹

- Change the inequitable funding of schools in Illinois so that a student's zip code does not determine the **quality of their education**.
- Create universal, progressive, children's savings accounts so every child has a tool to become financially capable, save for his or her education, and build a foundation for **future mobility**.
- Provide training for early childhood educators to **reduce disciplinary practices** for young children that disrupt the learning process.
- Provide protections for children in publicly funded early childhood settings **against preventable expulsion and suspension**; and equip early childhood professionals and administrators with necessary professional development, training, and technical assistance to recognize and address implicit biases, as well as support children with challenging behaviors.



RESOURCES FOR CHANGE

What follows is a reading list of sorts comprised of recommendations, best practices and tools for moving forward more boldly and collectively with a response to violence and trauma across Illinois.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION BLUEPRINTS

[Building a Safe Chicago](#)

[Police Accountability Task Force Report](#)

[Healthy Chicago 2.0: Partnering to Improve Health Equity](#)

[Strategies for Reducing Gun Violence in America's Cities](#)

[Engaging Communities in Reducing Gun Violence: A Road Map for Safer Communities](#)

[Final Report of the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform](#)

YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION BEST PRACTICES

[Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action](#)

[Preventing Youth Violence: An Overview of the Evidence](#)

[Youth Violence Prevention Initiatives](#)

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

[Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation](#)

[Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence](#)

[Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services](#)



JUSTICE

As we've shown previously, the justice system levies disproportionate consequences on people of color and poses barriers to rising out of poverty. Making the justice system more humane, rehabilitative, and equitable would reduce the trauma experienced in prison, reduce the likelihood of violence, and keep fewer people in poverty. Estimates show that employment restrictions based on criminal records cost the nation \$80 billion in GDP per year.¹⁵²

- Reform the criminal justice system to ensure **fair and equal law enforcement**, eliminate mandatory minimum sentences, advance comprehensive sentencing reforms, and eliminate solitary confinement.
- Reduce the **collateral consequences of criminal records**—like barriers to employment, education, and housing—that impede successful reentry for people with criminal records.

HOUSING

Affordable, decent, safe housing is an important part of the violence reduction equation. Low-income housing development, and the associated revitalization of neighborhoods, has been shown to bring with it reductions in crime and violent crime over time.^{153, 154} In addition, housing vouchers, a critical resource for making existing housing affordable, has been shown to reduce domestic violence victimization.¹⁵⁵

- Address the nation's affordable housing crisis that destabilizes so many families and our legacy of housing segregation, by **supporting and expanding subsidized housing programs** that help individuals and families experiencing poverty afford housing and by making investments to **create diverse, inclusive communities** with access to education, jobs, transportation, and health care.



TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Trauma is the overwhelming consequence of violence—and unaddressed trauma can greatly harm people’s well-being, life prospects, and public safety. Trauma-informed care is a treatment framework that “involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma.”¹⁵⁶ Programs that incorporate principles of trauma-informed care have been shown to reduce recidivism and recurring experiences of violence among young people.¹⁵⁷ Youth enrolled in an interdisciplinary Chicago program that offered youth development, trauma-informed care, and restorative justice improved on 41 outcome measures, including personal empowerment and post-traumatic growth.¹⁵⁸

- Incorporating a **trauma-informed approach to care** within public services, schools, criminal justice settings, and health and human services, particularly those that work with **communities heavily impacted by violence**, can be a powerful tool in stemming the cycle of violence and promoting healing.
- Provide targeted **support to children, youth and adults exposed to lethal violence**, including domestic violence, homicides, suicides, and community violence.



JOB AND INCOME

Providing employment opportunities has been shown to have large impacts on reducing violence. One estimate predicts that adding 50 new jobs that non-college-educated males would be qualified to hold in a neighborhood would reduce the crime rate by 4.4 per 1,000 people.¹⁵⁹ A Chicago summer youth jobs program was shown to reduce violence by 43 percent over 16 months, or nearly 4 fewer violent crimes per youth.¹⁶⁰

- Establish permanent federal and state funding for **subsidized employment programs** targeted at individuals and communities most at risk of violence and trauma.
- Invest in and protect work support benefits including the earned income tax credits, child care subsidies, health insurance, and supplemental nutritional assistance to ensure that people receive the support they need to be **successful in work** and to **provide for themselves and their families**.
- Increase job quality for all workers by **raising the wage floor** and requiring paid sick and family leave so that everyone can work and take care of themselves and their family.
- **Reevaluate laws and policies that strip wealth** from individuals and families, such as predatory and auto title lending regulation, civil asset forfeiture laws, and debt collection practices.
- Invest in communities and individuals through infrastructure investments that **build wealth in low-income communities**.
- Ensure **fair and equitable access to quality jobs** for everyone who wants to work through pathways to employment opportunities in infrastructure, training, and career pathways by using strategies like apprenticeships, subsidized employment, on-the-job training, and adult basic education.



THE CONSEQUENCES OF BUDGET POLICY

Fundamental to addressing the long-term drivers of poverty and violence are resources for programs that help families meet their needs and connect with opportunity. Education, community mental health, anti-violence programming, youth and adult employment programs, housing subsidies and income supports all play an important role mitigating the worst effects of poverty and addressing long standing economic inequity.

As of the release of this report, Illinois has gone more than 20 months without a budget. As the state stumbles forward, operating by court order and inadequate emergency appropriations, people experiencing poverty are being abandoned. The very programs that help address the long-term drivers of violence have been eroding and in some cases shutting down completely. Many vital programs, such as after-school programs, domestic violence programming, reentry programs, housing and homelessness programs, and anti-violence programs, may not survive this protracted budget battle. For example, approximately 80,000 Illinoisans lost access to mental health services as a result of the ongoing state budget crisis, and over half of mental health services providers reported that they were unable to meet the basic needs of their clients in the prior year.¹⁶¹ The infrastructure Illinois needs to address violence and poverty in our communities in the long term is being destroyed.

The only way to shore up this infrastructure is to make real investments—and that takes real revenue. Illinois has a sizable deficit, collecting significantly fewer revenues than it needs for even the most basic responsibilities of state government—and far short of that needed to meet our state priorities or supporting meaningful improvements to our communities. Illinois lawmakers must summon the political courage necessary to take hard tax votes and raise the revenue needed to address our state's needs.

While Illinois is woefully in need of revenue, it is also the fifth most regressive tax state in the union, meaning that the poorest residents pay a significantly larger share of their income in taxes than the richest residents. As we advance new revenue options, we must also advance a fair tax system in Illinois for individuals and corporations, where higher rates apply to higher income levels and lower rates to lower income levels, to more equitably generate the income the state of Illinois needs to ensure everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

At the same time Illinois is struggling to find a solution to its budget woes, threats abound at the federal level. Federal spending on vital programs for low- and moderate-income families is at historic lows and at risk of losing even more ground. Executive orders and proposals at the federal level are taking aim at people experiencing poverty—including stripping these individuals and families of meaningful health coverage, access to food, and affordable housing. As a result, tens of millions of families may lose some of their most basic supports. The new administration has proposed cuts to key programs like domestic violence grants and legal services for the poor. For Illinois, a state that is already teetering through a fiscal crisis, federal budget cuts could further threaten to leave communities without any meaningful resources to address poverty and violence.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Asset Poverty and Liquid Asset Poverty

Asset poverty is defined as a household's lack of savings or financial cushion that limits their ability to sustain temporary financial set-backs and subsist at the poverty level for 3 months. Liquid asset poverty is defined as having insufficient savings or financial assets that are liquid (i.e., easy to sell or convert into cash without any loss in value) to subsist at the poverty level for 3 months in the absence of income. Learn more about [asset poverty](#) and [liquid asset poverty](#).

Fair Market Rents (FMRs)

FMRs indicate the amount of money a given property would command if it were available for lease. The Department of Housing and Urban Development uses FMRs to determine the eligibility of rental housing units for the Section 8 Housing Assistance and Housing Voucher programs. Learn more about [FMRs](#).

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life, and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate food. Learn more about [food insecurity](#).

Income Poverty

Determining if an individual or family is income poor involves tallying up a family's annual income and determining if the amount falls below the poverty threshold for the family's size. If the annual income does fall below the threshold, then the family and every individual in it is considered to be in poverty. Non-relatives, such as housemates, do not count. Money income used to compute poverty status includes the following (before taxes; noncash benefits and capital gains/losses do not count): earnings, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, public assistance, veterans' payments, survivor benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, dividends, rents, royalties, income from estates and trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support assistance from outside the household, and other miscellaneous sources. Learn more about [poverty thresholds and guidelines](#).

Infant Mortality

Deaths occurring to infants under 1 year of age per 1,000 live births.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as non-white. Learn more about [institutional racism](#).

Low Birth Weight

Low birth weight is defined as a birth weight of less than 2,500 grams (approximately 5 pounds, 8 ounces).

Medicaid

Medicaid is a jointly funded, Federal-State health insurance program for certain individuals and families with low-incomes and few resources. Learn more about [Medicaid](#).

Murder & Homicide

Throughout this report, we refer to both murder and homicide. Murder

includes first- and second-degree murder; homicide includes both types of murder as well as involuntary manslaughter and reckless homicide.

Racial Equity

Racial equity means that ideal situation in which society's systems and markets perform equally well for different racial and ethnic groups. It means that our educational systems work as well for black Americans as they do for whites, that our justice systems works equally well, that our health systems work equally well. Learn more about [racial equity](#).

Rent-Burdened Households

Households are rent burdened when they spend over 30% of their income on housing. Households are severely rent burdened when they spend over 50% of their income on housing. Renter costs include contract rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water, and sewer) and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.) if these are paid by the renter (or paid for the renter by someone else).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Formerly called Food Stamps, SNAP provides low-income families with supplemental income to buy food. Learn more about [SNAP](#).

Teen Birth Rate

The teen birth rate is the number of births to women ages 15 to 19 per 1,000 women of that age in the population.

Trauma

Trauma in this report refers to psychological trauma, which includes a set of negative psychological or emotional effects that occur as a result of a distressing event. Symptoms of trauma may include denial, seeming stunned or dazed, hyperarousal/sensitivity to threats and aggression, perceiving that the world is a dangerous place, dependency, hyperactivity, and irrationality. Read more about [trauma](#).

Unemployment Rate

Persons are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. This definition of unemployment leads to an undercount as people who are discouraged from job seeking or those who are only marginally attached to the workforce (i.e., are not employed but currently want a job, have looked for work in the last 12 months, and are available for work) are classified as "not in the labor force" instead of "unemployed." Learn more about how [unemployment is defined and measured](#).

Violent Crime & Serious Violent Crime

Unless otherwise specified, violent crime in this report is referencing offenses reported to police through the Uniform Crime Reporting system and is defined as murder, sexual assault or rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Serious violent crime is a term used by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which surveys crime victims, and therefore does not include murder since murder victims cannot be surveyed; the term refers to a subset of violent crime that includes rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Read more about [violent crime](#) and the [NCVS](#).



APPENDIX: CITATIONS

CITATIONS

- ¹ Author's analysis of data from U. S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 1-year estimates program, 2015.
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An Annual Snapshot of the State of Poverty in Illinois

Seventeen years ago, Heartland Alliance identified poverty and economic insecurity as being at the root of many of the struggles faced by the organization's program participants. We realized that no one was talking about poverty in a comprehensive way. We also identified a knowledge gap among legislators and other decision-makers regarding some very basic poverty facts—What is poverty? How many people are poor? Who is poor? The Social IMPACT Research Center began working on a project intended to fill this knowledge gap and address the piecemeal approach to tackling poverty-related issues. The crux of this effort became the annual Report on Illinois Poverty. The Report's primary approach involves weaving together data on education, employment, housing, health care, nutrition and hunger, and assets, to tell a richer, more comprehensive story of poverty. The goals of the project are to educate lay people, legislators, and other decision-makers in Illinois that poverty is a reality for millions of people in the state, and ultimately to influence policy and programmatic changes in order to expand opportunity for the most vulnerable people in the state of Illinois.

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights

Heartland Alliance, one of the world's leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve those who are experiencing homelessness, living in poverty, or seeking safety. Heartland Alliance provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of safety, health, housing, education, economic opportunity, and justice—and leads state and national policy efforts which target lasting change for individuals and build towards a society of equity and opportunity for all.

Social IMPACT Research Center

The Social IMPACT Research Center is a program of Heartland Alliance, one of the world's leading anti-poverty organizations. IMPACT does research that helps leaders create change. We collaborate with clients to measure and grow their social impact. Our user-friendly work enables nonprofits, foundations, and governments to advance real-world solutions to poverty.

To learn more, visit www.heartlandalliance.org/research, follow us on Twitter [@IMPACTHeartland](https://twitter.com/IMPACTHeartland), or like us on Facebook at facebook.com/social.impact.research.

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