Communicating Research: Presentations by the 2023 Yearwood Publication Contest Winners

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ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AUTHORITY

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Illegal Gun Carrying: Motives, Consequences, and Illinois Arrest Trends

Gun violence is a persistent and concerning issue across the country and the state of Illinois. In communities with high levels of gun violence, individuals may carry guns for protection. These individuals may never intend to, or actually, fire them; however, if arrested for possession, they may face a felony conviction. We summarized literature on why individuals illegally carry guns, how they obtain them, and the criminal legal ramifications they may face. In addition, we examined Illinois gun-related arrest data collected between 2012 and 2021. The findings revealed firearm...
Illegal Gun Carrying Study

What prompted our examination?

• Enforcement often focuses on possession
• In IL it is a felony with harsh penalties
• Some noting a trend of high gun possession arrests, particularly of Black men in IL and Chicago
• Led to news outlets and academics to looking at the issue
Gun possession arrests doubled in Chicago, but shootings remained high — and unsolved

Hundreds more Black Chicagoans are pleading guilty to gun-possession charges. Here’s one possible reason why.

As Chicago police have made more gun arrests, prosecutors are taking nearly all cases through the secretive grand jury process, where indictments are close to a sure thing.

Arrests in Illinois for Illegal Possession of a Firearm

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

RESULTS OF THE CHICAGO INMATE SURVEY OF GUN ACCESS AND USE

January 2018

Philip J. Cook, Duke University
Harold A. Pollack, University of Chicago
Kailey White, University of Chicago
Methods: What Did We Do?

• Research questions
  • Were illegal gun carrying arrests increasing in IL?
  • Were there demographic differences in arrests?
  • What are motivations for gun carrying (from the literature)?

• Methods
  • Examined IL arrest data over 10 years, 2012-2021
  • Based on firearm-related state statute
  • Coded offenses as possession,” “discharge,” or “violent”
Methods Replicated by The Marshall Project

We reviewed statutes in the charge data and the text of the state and municipal laws to select the ones which covered illegal gun possession. We compared the selected statutes with ones included in the analysis for a 2022 report on illegal gun carrying arrests by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA). The possession statutes we used are consistent with the ones identified by the ICJIA researchers. However, the ICJIA researchers also included statutes that cover crimes related to the use of weapons in other crimes, such as “Armed robbery, aggravated vehicle hijacking with a firearm” (720 ILCS 5.0/18).

— George Bernard Shaw —
Key Takeaways

- Gun carrying arrests were up, overall arrests down
- Most gun-related arrests for possession (not use)
- Young black males in Chicago had most illegal gun-related arrests
- Most with gun-related arrests had prior criminal records
Gun carrying arrests dramatically increased, while overall arrests decreased.
What Can Be Done?

• Consider state and police policies that may lead to:
  • Excessive stops and searches
  • Targeting of Black youth in urban areas
  • Harsh penalties for those who possess, but not use guns, leading to mass incarceration

• Invest in:
  • Resources at the individual, community, and societal level
  • Gun violence prevention and diversion programs
  • Keeping guns away from those with extreme risk and DV restraining orders, conduct background checks
Communication Plan

• **Content**
  - Shared short abstract
  - Use figures, tables
  - Clear accessible language, for general public audience
  - Copy edited, subject matter expert review
  - Offer policy implications, recommendations

• **Dissemination**
  - Article on ICJIA website
  - Send Constant Contact email, featured in Research Unit newsletter
  - Social media posts
  - Presentations
References
