

## Shootings by Chicago Police Gordon Waldron, June 19, 2020

The Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) is required to investigate whenever a police officer discharges a firearm in a way that strikes another person, even if no complaint has been made about the shooting. (Chicago Municipal Code, Section 2-78-120 (c)(i).). The Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA) had the same duty before COPA. COPA reports on the number of such shootings in its quarterly and annual reports (as did IPRA).

### 1. Decline in Shootings by Chicago Police

COPA's 2019 Annual Report includes a table listing shootings by Chicago police for the years 2015-2017, other than shootings of animals, accidental firearm discharges, and officer suicides.<sup>1</sup> Here is the data:

Type of Shooting by Police	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Shooting – No Contact	23	24	12	15	5
Shooting - Fatal	8	12	9	5	3
Shooting - Injury	17	11	14	12	4
Total	48	47	35	32	12

From 2015 through 2019 total shootings by police have declined from 48 to 12, or by **75%**. Fatal shootings have declined from 8 to 3, or by **63%**.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, in its final Quarterly Report, issued in October, 2017, IPRA reported on the number of Chicago police firearm discharges in each year of the prior decade.<sup>3</sup> It reported a high of 123 shootings in 2009.<sup>4</sup> By 2019 shootings had declined to 12. That means that total shootings have

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1 See page 27 of that Report, which can be found on COPA's web page under "News and Publications," and then under "Publications," and then under "Annual Reports."

2 There were 36 fewer shootings in 2019 than in 2015, or a reduction rate of  $36/48 = 75\%$ . And there were five fewer fatal shootings in 2019 than in 2015, or a reduction rate of  $5/8 = 63\%$ .

3 See page 20 of that Report, which can be found on COPA's web page under "News and Publications," and then under "Legacy Publications." It is titled "IPRA's 2017 Third Quarter Report." All data in this paper about the number of police shootings from years prior to 2017 come from that Report.

4 The first two lines of the table list shootings each year that hit a person, and those that did not. I added those two figures to get the total shootings.

declined **90%** in that decade. And IPRA reported a high of 22 fatal shootings by police in 2011. Since then, fatal shootings have declined to 3 in 2019. That means that fatal shootings declined by **86%** in the eight years from 2011 through 2019.

Has the Chicago Police Department provided accurate data on police shootings to IPRA and COPA? One reason to believe so, at least as to shootings that hit someone, is that the press frequently reports on them, and once that happens, they are hard to hide. See also a report by an organization called “Campaign Zero,” which studies police departments. That report shows that killings by Chicago police officers in 2015-2016 were significantly lower than in many other cities in the U.S.A.<sup>5</sup>

Is the Chicago Police Department doing something right?

## **2. The Decline in Arrests May Explain a Significant Part of the Decline in Police Shootings**

IPRA's Third Quarter Report in October, 2017 contains at page 15 a table that shows that adult arrests in Chicago declined continuously from a high of 110,744 in 2009 to a low of 52,425 in 2016, a decline of 53%. (That Report does not explain the reasons for that decline.) If we compare police shootings in the same period, they declined from 123 in 2009 to 47 in 2016, or 62%.<sup>6</sup> It thus appears that the decline in arrests may explain a significant part, but not all, of the decline in shootings.<sup>7</sup>

Thus one way of encouraging a low level of shootings by police might be to encourage a low level of arrests.<sup>8</sup>

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5 Page 2 of that report, titled, “Police Use of Force Policy Analysis,” has a table titled “Rates of Killings by America's Largest Police Departments January 1, 2015 – July 15, 2016.” It shows, for the 100 largest cities in the United States, rates of killings by police per 1 million residents. Chicago, at 28<sup>th</sup> from the bottom, had about 5 killings per million persons. Miami was double that rate at 10 per million, and Atlanta was just under that rate. Omaha was almost three times as high, at just under 15 per million. Cincinnati was about four times as high, at just under 20 per million. The highest was Orlando at about 25 per million, five times higher than Chicago.

6 Shootings declined by a total of 76 from 2009 to 2016, for a decline of 62%.

7 The 2009 figure is from page 20 of IPRA's 2017 Third Quarter Report, while the 2016 figure is from page 27 of COPA's 2019 Annual Report.

8 What the impact of a low level of arrests would be on the Chicago crime rate is beyond this author's expertise.

### **3. African Americans are a High Percentage of Persons Arrested, and Shot and Killed by Chicago Police Officers**

The Chicago Police Department's Annual Reports for 2017 and 2018 show that African Americans made up 74% of the total Chicago arrests. Hispanic arrests made up 17% of the total. (See pages 65 and 64 of those Reports, respectively, which can be found on the web page of the Chicago Police Department.)

In its Final Quarterly Report, issued in October, 2017, IPRA included a table breaking down by gender, race and age, the persons shot and killed by Chicago Police officers. That table shows that African Americans were 103 (76%) of the 135 persons shot and killed from 2007 through 2017 by Chicago police officers.<sup>9</sup> By comparison, blacks made up only 32% of Chicago's population in 2010. (Wikipedia.)

One likely reason for the high rate of African Americans being shot and killed by the police is racial discrimination. Another related reason is that African Americans in Chicago appear to have more frequent contact with police as shown by their relatively high arrest rate, which may in turn be high because of racial discrimination.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See page 22 of IPRA's Third Quarterly Report in 2017. It also shows that killings of Hispanics were 13% of the total, whites were 8% of the total, and unknowns were 3%.

<sup>10</sup> See, by comparison, a recent report issued by the Illinois ACLU, titled, "Racism in the Rear View Mirror, Illinois Traffic Stop Data 2015-2017." It concluded that Illinois law enforcement officers stop Black and Latinx drivers at rates beyond their representation in the driving population. Moreover, in recent years, in the State of Illinois:

- "Black and Latinx drivers were searched about 1.8 and 1.4 times more often, respectively, than white drivers.
- Black and Latinx drivers were more likely to be asked to be searched, even though they were less likely to be found with contraband during consent searches than white drivers."

The ACLU study can be found on the Illinois ACLU web page. See <https://www.aclu-il.org/en/press-releases/new-aclu-report-shows-continued-racial-disparities-illinois-traffic-stops>, and <https://illinoistrafficstops.com>.