

COSTA RICA

Analysis of intentional homicide

January – June 2022

Highlights

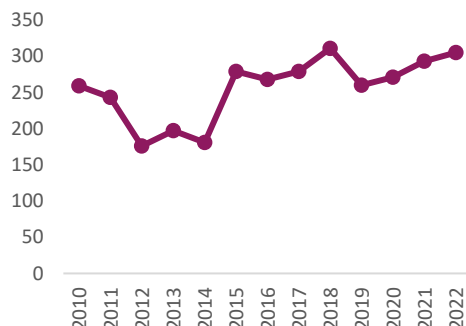
- Records show 305 victims of intentional homicide, 12 more victims as compared to the same period in 2021, according to data from the Judicial Investigation Department.
- Some 279 of these victims were male (15 more victims than in 2021), 21 were female (8 fewer victims than in 2021), and there were 5 victims whose sex is unknown.
- On average, in the first half of 2022, records show 51 victims per month, 2 more victims per month, as compared to the same period the year before.
- The average victim in 2022 was 34 years old. By sex, the average age in males was 34, and in females it was 33.
- The primary victims of intentional homicide continue to be young people, with 53% between 20 and 34 years of age.
- As for the means employed, 70% of intentional homicides involved a firearm, 16% a sharp object, and 13% by other means.
- In terms of motive, 60% of intentional homicides are linked to organized crime, 182 to settling scores, or for revenge,ⁱ and in 2 cases the motive was professionalⁱⁱ.
- Provinces where occurrence is highest are: Limón (73 victims), San José (60 victims), Alajuela (57 victims) and Puntarenas (48 victims).
- Cantons where occurrence is highest are: Limón, San José, Alajuela, Pococí, Puntarenas, Guácimo, Matina, Corredores.

In all, they accounted for 46% of all instances of intentional homicides.

Evidence

January to June 2022, a total of 305 intentional homicides on record, and the only year that was higher than this was 2018 (311 intentional homicides) when analyzing the first half of each year in the period from 2010-2022.

Victims of intentional homicide by year, first semesters 2010-2022

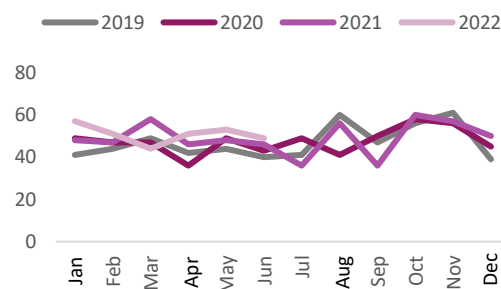


Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first semesters from 2010 – 2022.

The average monthly number of victims of intentional homicide increased over the last 4 years (43 victims in 2019, 45 victims in 2020,

49 victims in 2021 and 51 victims in 2022). From 2019 to 2022, 8 on average 8 more people die per month.

Victims of intentional homicide by year and month, 2019-2022

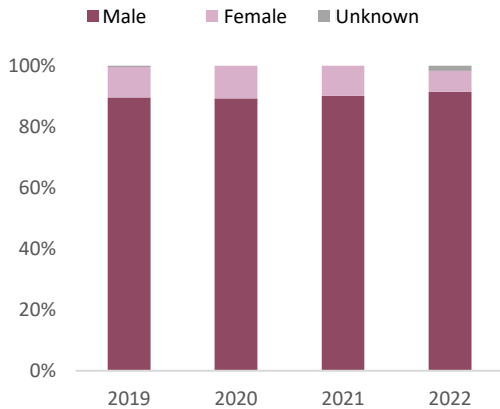


Source: Judicial Investigation Department, 2019, 2020, 2021 and first half of 2022.

By disaggregating the occurrence of intentional homicides in 2022 by sex, 91% of victims (279 victims) were male, 7% (21 victims) female, and 2% (5 victims) were persons whose sex was unknown. This

proportion is similar to previous years (2019, 2020 and 2021 to compare with pre-pandemic figures).

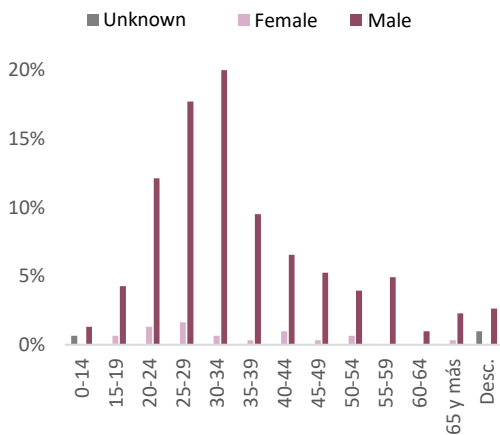
Victims of intentional homicide by sex, first semesters 2019-2022



Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first semesters in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Overall, as regards the characterization of victims in the first half of 2022, 50% (152 victims) were male, ages 20-34, 86% (263 victims) were Costa Rican nationals, in 70% (215 victims) of cases the cause death was firearm, and 60% (182 victims) were deaths related to score settling or revenge.

Victims of intentional homicide by age and sex, first half of 2022



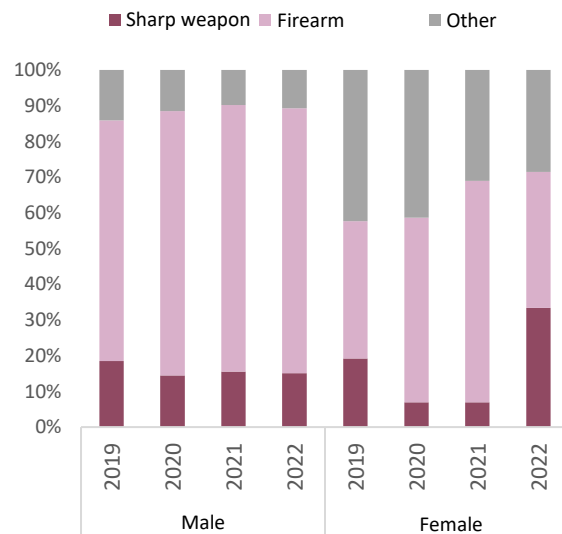
Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first half of 2022.

Firearm-related intentional homicides continue to predominate in Costa Rica

Specifically, in the relation of weapon used and sex of the victim, for the first half of 2022 some 74% of males (207 victims) were killed with a firearm, 15% (42 victims) with a sharp weapon and 10% (30 victims) by other means.

In the case of females, in only 38% (8 victims) the means of death was a firearm, some 33% (7 victims) a sharp weapon and 29% (6 victims) by other means. This is to say that the firearm-related intentional homicides that continue to predominate in Costa Rica are by and large male.

Victims of intentional homicide by sex, year, and type of weapon, first semesters 2019-2022

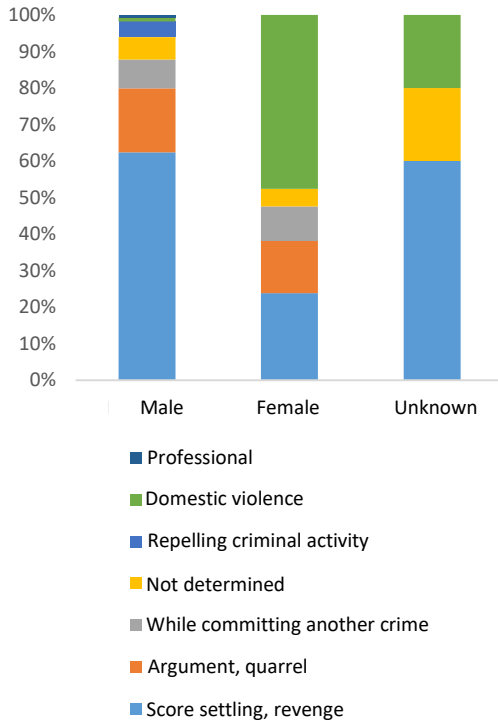


Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first semesters in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Organized crime kills 6 in 10 victims of intentional homicide in Costa Rica

In terms of motive for homicide by sex of victim, in the first half of 2022, in the case of 48% of female victims (10 women) the motive was primarily domestic violence, while the majority of males, 62% (174 victims) died as a result of score settling and revenge.

Victims of intentional homicide by sex and motive, first half of 2022



Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first half of 2022.

By type of weapon, during the first half of 2022, sharp weapons were most used when the motive was arguments or quarrels (23 victims) and domestic violence (8 victims), while firearms predominated when the motive was score settling or revenge (163 victims).

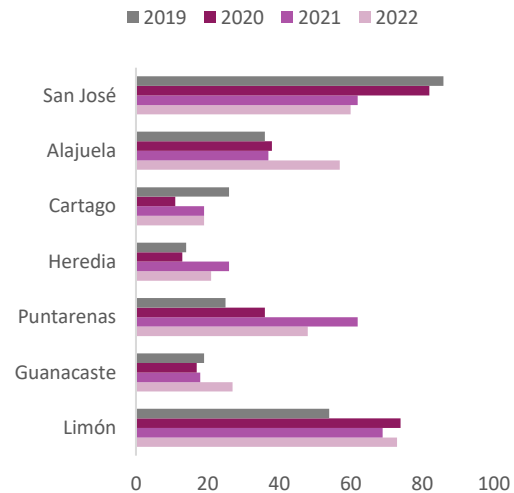
It should be noted that adding up all instances where the motive was score settling or revenge and contract killing, the result is the total number of organized crime related deaths in Costa Rica. In the first half of 2022, some 60% of deaths (184 victims) had to do with organized crime, that is, 6 in 10 victims of intentional homicide in Costa Rica.

This proportion is on the rise, and when comparing the first semesters of the last four years, it can be seen that 48% (124 victims) of intentional homicides were linked to organized crime in 2019, 57% (154 victims) in 2020, 58% (169 victims) in 2021 and finally, 60% (184 victims) of deaths in 2022.

The territorial nature of intentional homicide in Costa Rica

As regards the scene of the crime, in the first half of 2022, the provinces with the highest number of cases were Limón (73 victims), San José (60 victims), Alajuela (57 victims) and Puntarenas (48 victims). The frequency is lower in the other provinces during the same time period. Adding up the total number of deaths in Guanacaste (27 victims), Heredia (21 victims) and Cartago (19 victims) this is still lower than the number of victims recorded in Limón.

Victims of intentional homicide by sex and motive, first half of 2022



Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first semesters in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

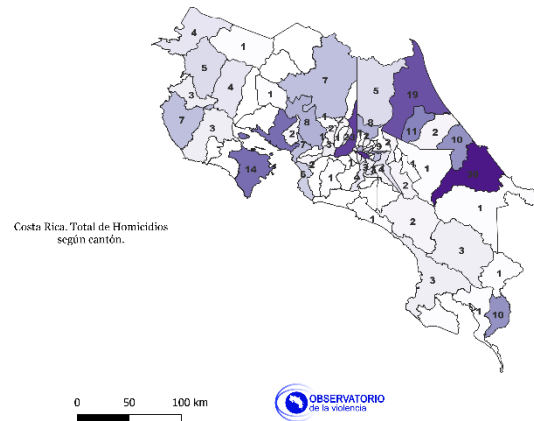
Comparing first semesters in 2019, 2020 and 2021, reveals the following:

- San José was had the highest number of cases in 2019 and 2020, however, starting in 2021, it was Limón.
- Puntarenas doubled the number of cases in 2021 as compared to 2019 and 2020, whereas it currently shows a 23% reduction when comparing 2022 and 2021.

- Alajuela remained practically the same in 2019, 2020 and 2021, with a 58% rise in 2022 as compared to 2019.
- In Guanacaste, Heredia and Cartago, despite fluctuations over time, the number of intentional homicides remains low.

As regards the cantons with the highest incidence of intentional homicides, in the first half of 2022, at the top of the list are Limón (30 victims), San José (24 victims), Alajuela (23 victims), Pococi (19 victims), Puntarenas (14 victims), Guácimo (11 victims), Matina (10 victims) and Corredores (10 victims). These 8 cantons register more than 10 victims during the first half of this year, and in aggregate they represent some 46% of the total number of victims on record.

Victims of intentional homicide by canton,
first half of 2022



Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first half of 2022.

Conclusion

In Costa Rica, intentional homicide remains a predominantly a male phenomenon, with young nationals losing their lives to firearms for reasons involving organized crime.

ⁱ These cases may involve circumstances related to drugs or organized criminal groups.

ⁱⁱ In these cases, the perpetrator charges a fee for taking the life of the victim, known as contract killing.