

# COSTA RICA

## Analysis of Intentional Homicide

### January-December 2021



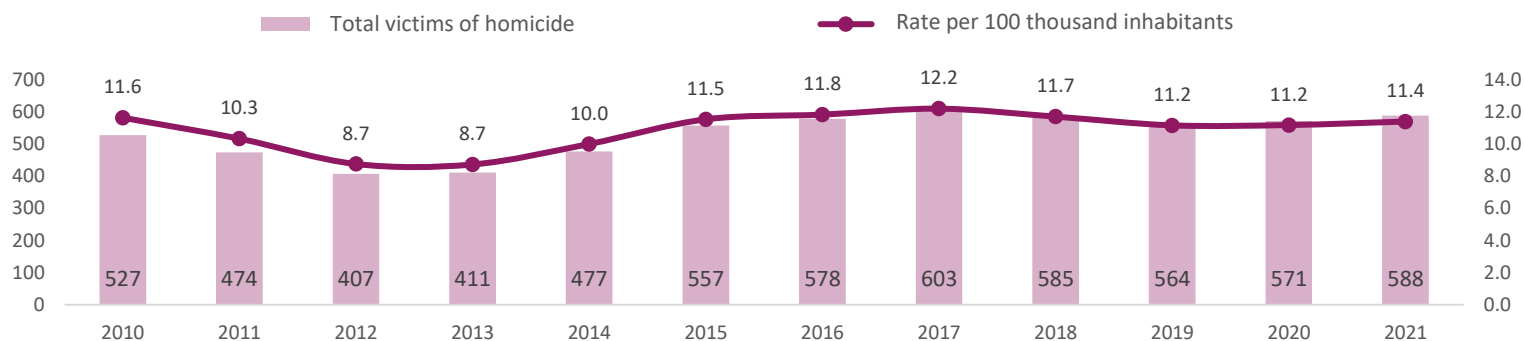
#### Highlights

- From January through December 2021, there were 588 victims of intentional homicide registered, as per Judicial Investigation Department data. This figure is equivalent to a rate of 11.4 intentional homicides per 100,000 population.
- In 2021, there were 55 female victims of intentional homicide (7 fewer victims than in 2020) and 532 males (23 more victims than in 2020).
- In 2021, the average age of the victims was 35; by sex, the average age in males was 35, and in females it was 33<sup>i</sup>, similar to 2020.
- Young males were the main victims of intentional homicide. One in two victims were ages 20 to 24 in 2021.
- As for the means employed, 73% of the intentional homicides in 2021 were committed with a firearm, 15% a knife, and 12% by other means.
- In terms of motive, 56% of intentional homicides are linked to organized crime, 32% to settle a score, or for revenge,<sup>ii</sup> and 5% due to a professional motive<sup>iii</sup>.
- San Jose and Alajuela provinces exhibited -9% and -20% reductions of intentional homicides, respectively, as compared to 2020. In the case of San Jose, this corresponds to 21 fewer victims in 2021.
- Three provinces account for 71% of intentional homicides linked to organized crime, namely Limón (34%), San José (19%) and Puntarenas (18).

#### Evidence

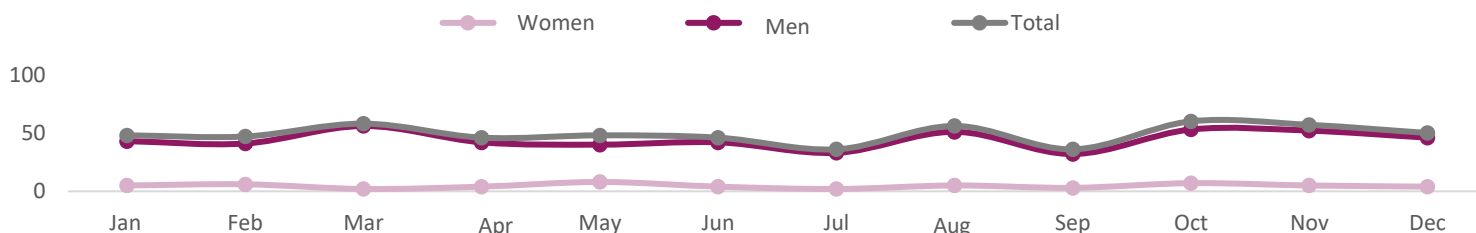
As compared to the period from January to December in 2020, there was a 3% increase in the total number of victims of intentional homicide (18 more victims in 2021). The intentional homicide rate also increased from 11.2 victims per 100,000 population in 2020 to 11.4 in 2021.

Victims of intentional homicide per year, 2010-2020  
Rate per 100 thousand inhabitants and absolute



The months with the highest number of intentional homicides were March, August, October and November, according to the Judicial Investigation Department.

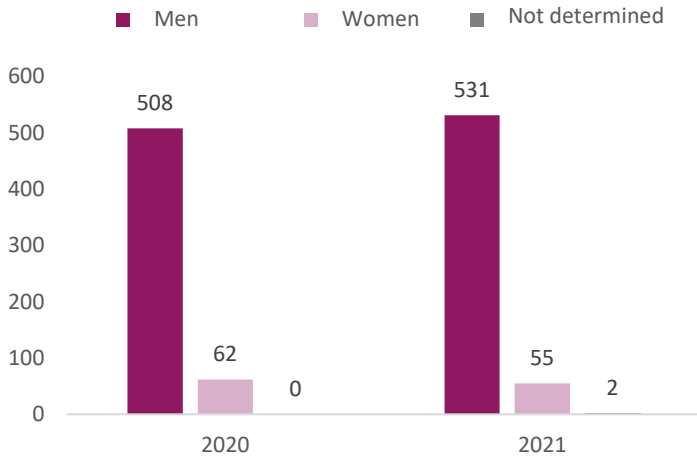
Victims of Intentional Homicide by Sex and by Month, 2021



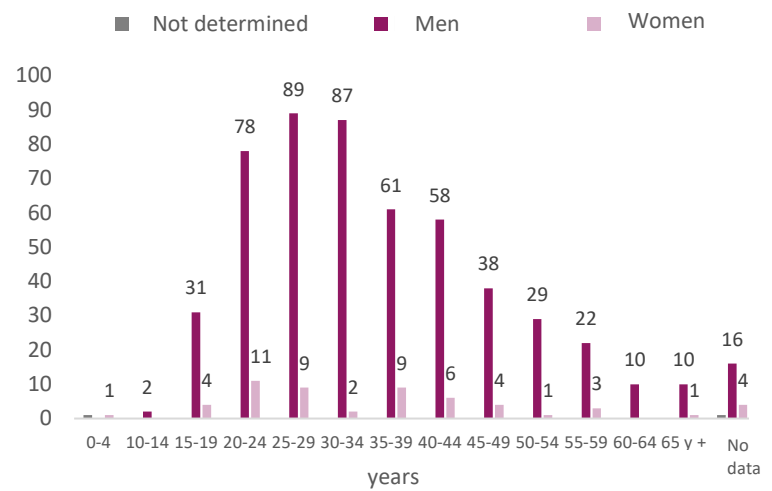
In 2021, 9 in 10 victims were male, according to the Judicial Investigation Department. The total number of female victims of intentional homicide dropped from 62 in 2020 to 55 in 2021 (-11%, 7 victims) while the total number of male victims rose (+5%, 23 victims) as compared to 2020. Additionally, records show 2 victims of unknown sex.

Some 47% of intentional homicide victims were young people ages 20 to 34, according to the Judicial Investigation Department. As for age in five-year increments and sex, 1 in 2 male victims of homicide were ages 20 to 34, and about 1 in 3 females were 20 to 29 years of age.

Victims of Intentional Homicide by Sex and by Year, 2020 and 2021

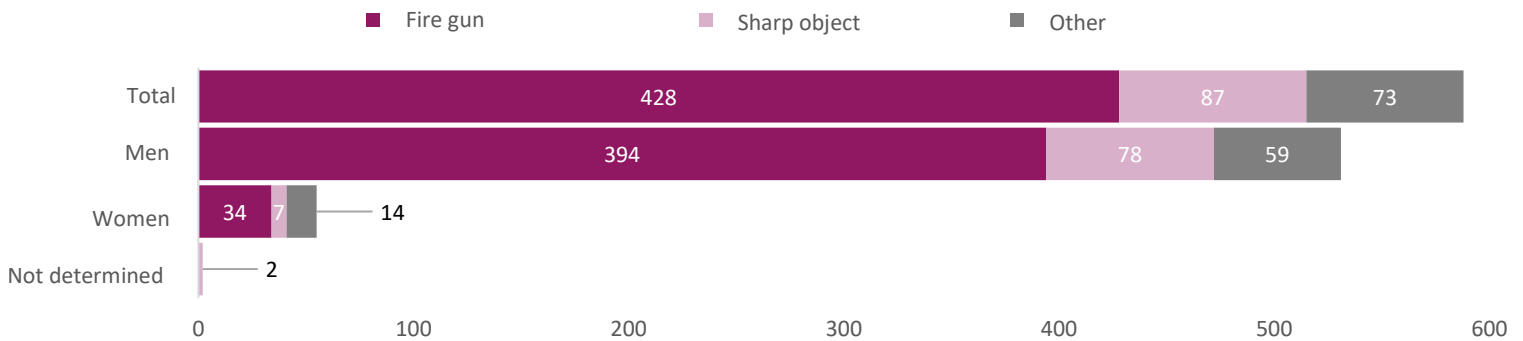


Victims of Intentional Homicide by Sex and by Age, 2021

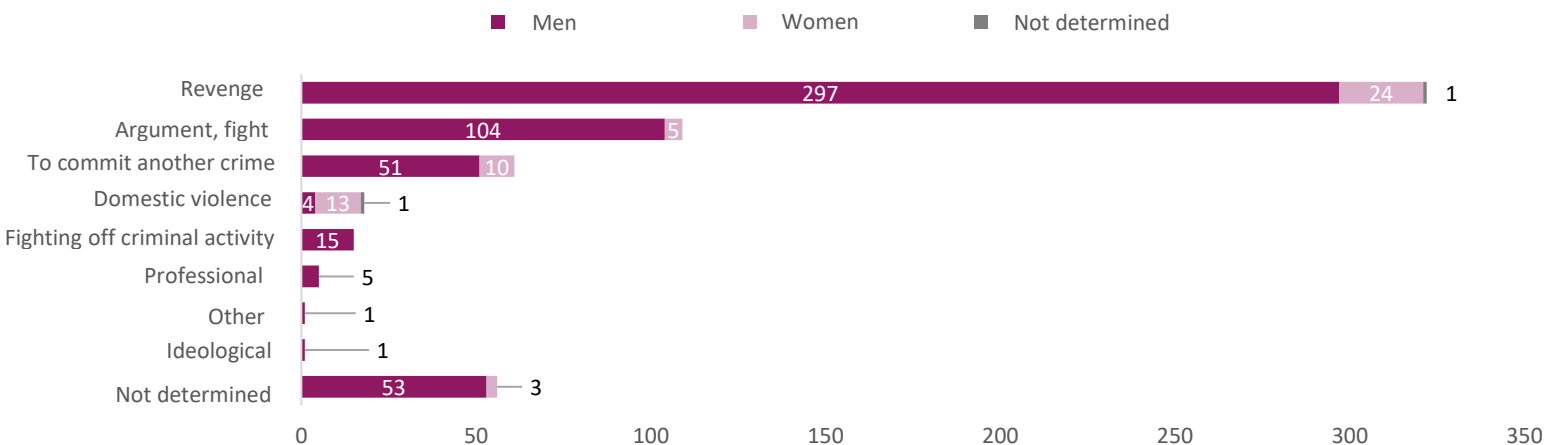


In 2021, 73% of registered intentional homicides were committed using a firearm, according to the Judicial Investigation Department. By sex of victim, firearms were used most against both males (74%) as females (62%) in 2021. 56% of intentional homicides were linked to organized crime, according to the Judicial Investigation Department.

Intentional Homicide Victims by Type of Weapon and by Sex, 2021



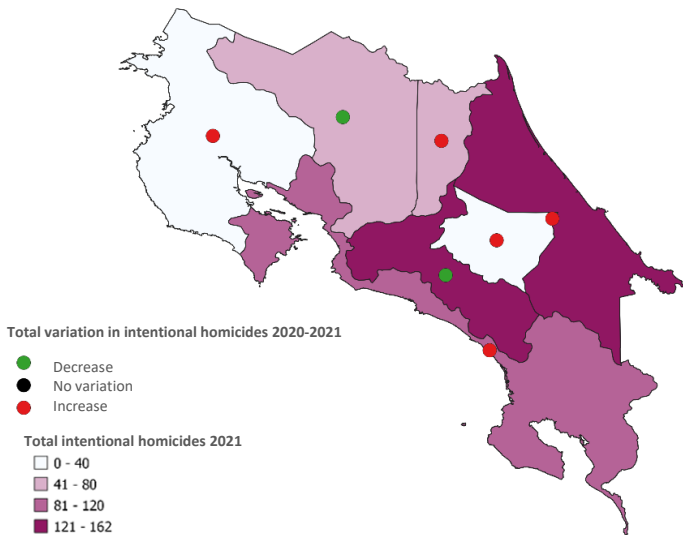
Intentional Homicide Victims by Motive and by Sex, 2021



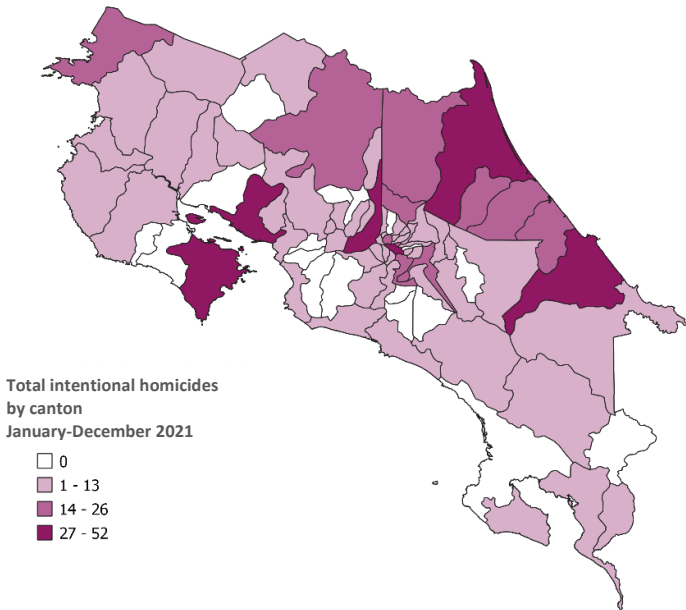
Five provinces exhibit increases in 2021 as compared to 2020. Guanacaste (costal province) and Cartago 6% and 8% respectively, while Heredia (15%), Limon (19%) and Puntarenas (25%) registered greater variations (the latter are coastal provinces).

In Heredia Province, the counties with the highest number of intentional homicides in 2021 were Sarapiquí (17 victims) and the central county (15 victims). In the case of Limon Province, the counties with the highest records were the central county (52 victims) and Pococi (41 victims). And as for Puntarenas Province, the central county accounts for most cases (50 victims).

Victims of Intentional Homicides by Province, 2021

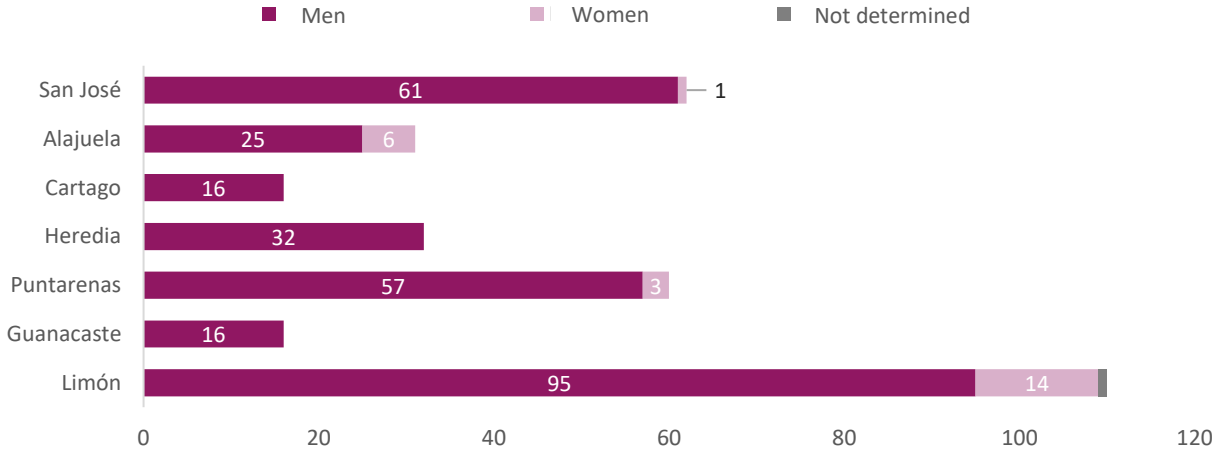


Victims of Intentional Homicides by County, 2021



Limón, San José and Puntarenas account for 71% of the intentional homicides that are linked to organized crime, according to the Judicial Investigation Department.

Victims of Intentional Homicide Linked to Organized Crime by Province and by Sex, 2021



Source: Prepared by UNDP InfoSegura with information provided by the Judicial Investigation Department, Costa Rica. Note: This information was provided on January 21, 2022 by the Judicial Investigation Department.

<sup>i</sup> In 2021, the age was unknown in 21 instances, this was 4% of the total number of victims, and could affect the estimate of average age.  
<sup>ii</sup> These are instances where the circumstances involved drugs or organized criminal groups.  
<sup>iii</sup> These are instances where the perpetrator is paid for taking the victim's life, also known as a "contract killing."