

**A Closer Look at Juvenile Shooting Victims:  
A Supplement to 2016 Delaware Statewide Shooting Report**

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## **A Closer Look at Juvenile Shooting Victims: Supplement to the 2016 Delaware Statewide Shooting Report**

### **Overview**

In September 2017, *The News Journal*, in cooperation with various partners, published a series of articles on juvenile victims of shooting incidents in the City of Wilmington between January 1, 2015 and September 4 (Labor Day), 2017. These reports cited the number of victims, the victimization rate (per 1,000 population), and provided comparison rates for similar-sized cities in other states.

The purpose of this report is to provide official data on juvenile victims of Delaware and Wilmington criminal shooting incidents since 2011, the year the Delaware Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) began its statewide shooting report effort. Other than for context as needed, this supplement does not provide broader data on shooting incidents, victims and suspects—the reader is directed to SAC’s website (<https://sac.delaware.gov/crime/>) for our full shooting incident reports which contain that information.

This supplement does not attempt to make comparisons between Wilmington and similar-sized cities in other states. Criminal shooting incidents involving juvenile victims are a low base-rate event, and understanding the variety of general local community factors and characteristics, along with those that directly relate to violent crime and the use of firearms during such crimes is critical in order to make valid and meaningful comparisons between communities and to develop meaningful interventions to mitigate their occurrence.

The FBI says it best in the introductory note to its Preliminary Annual Uniform Crime Report, January-December 2012:

“Individuals ... are cautioned against drawing conclusions by making direct comparisons between cities. Comparisons lead to simplistic and/or incomplete analyses that often create misleading perceptions adversely affecting communities and their residents. Valid assessments are possible only with careful study and analysis of the range of unique conditions affecting each local law enforcement jurisdiction. It is important to remember that crime is a social problem and, therefore, a concern of the entire community ... ”

## **Methodology**

The victim counts in this report are drawn from the shooting incident databases maintained by the SAC and which form the basis of our shooting report efforts. The methodology used in those studies is covered in depth in those reports and will not be repeated here. To address the topics of concern in this supplement, victims under age 18 years were identified in our databases for the years 2011 through September 2017 and were selected for further analysis. Among the information examined was victim age, race, and gender and shooting incident location. To provide victimization rates per 1,000 people, population estimates were downloaded from the Delaware Population Consortium's website.

## **General Considerations**

It is important to note that the Center defines a qualifying shooting incident in a very specific way: a criminal, non-accidental discharge of a firearm that results in the death or injury of one or more victims. Also, each incident involving the discharge of a firearm is rigorously reviewed months after it occurred before making a final determination regarding whether to classify it as a qualifying incident for the purposes of the SAC's reporting efforts.

Shooting incident count reports that draw on media or unofficial sources will likely differ from the figures included in the Center's reports. Based on SAC's experience, not all shooting incidents result in media coverage, and some incidents that initially appear to be qualifying ones are later determined to be non-qualifying and vice versa.

## Results

### *Juvenile Victims: Overall and from City of Wilmington Incidents*

Overall juvenile victim counts from 2011 through September 2017 ranged from 13-38 statewide and 9-27 for incidents which occurred in the City of Wilmington (Table 1). The peak number of juvenile victims for both geographic areas occurred in 2016, a year in which youth gangs appear to have been more active in shooting incidents.

Also provided in this table for context are the total numbers of Delaware and Wilmington-incident victims for each year. Overall, juveniles accounted for 7.6%-14.6% of all shooting victims statewide and 9%-18.4% of those injured in Wilmington. Juvenile victims were predominantly male, though the percentages across years showed more variation than that for victims of all ages given the low juvenile victim totals.

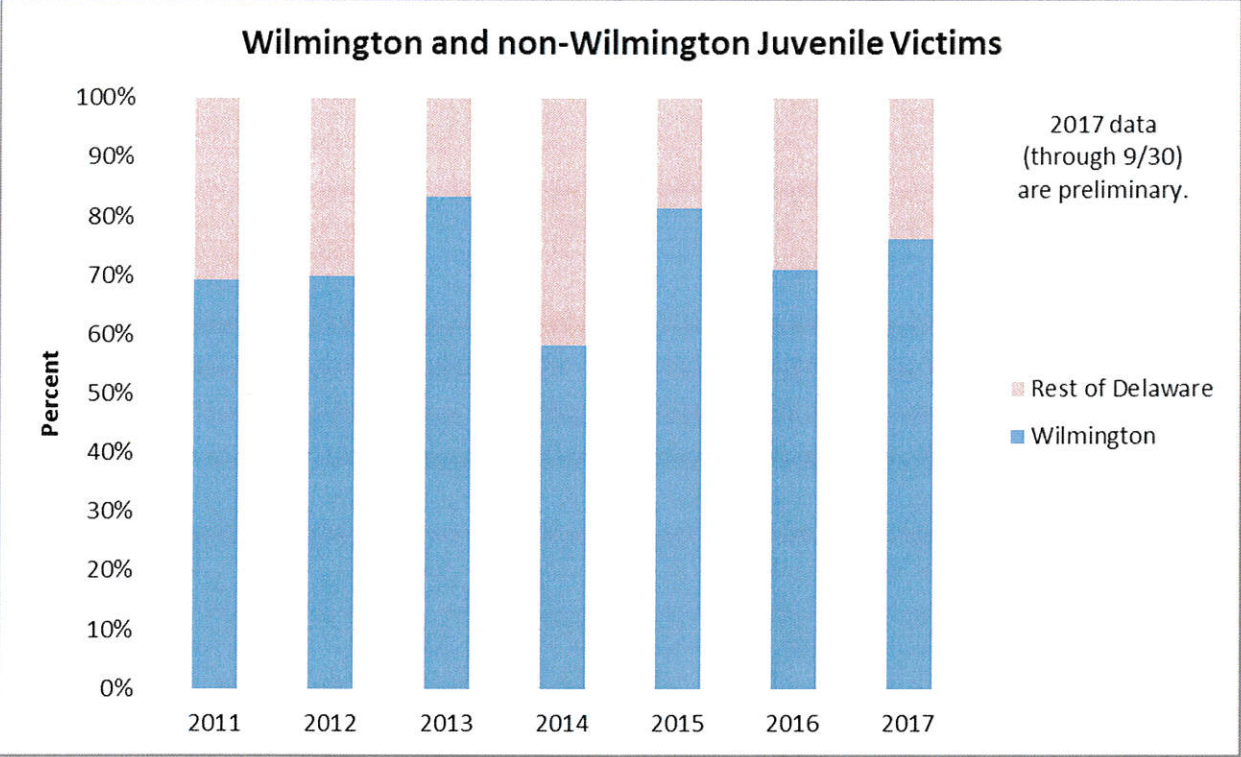
Table 1: Juvenile Victims of Delaware and Wilmington Shooting Incidents

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total Delaware Victims	172	227	226	230	281	261	248
Juveniles (under 18 yrs)	13	20	18	24	27	38	21
Percent	7.6%	8.8%	8.0%	10.4%	9.6%	14.6%	8.5%
Total Wilmington Victims	95	122	144	136	151	147	178
Juveniles (under 18 yrs)	9	14	15	14	22	27	16
Percent	9.5%	11.5%	10.4%	10.3%	14.6%	18.4%	9.0%
Juvenile Victims—Male %							
Delaware	92.3%	95.0%	66.7%	100%	81.5%	89.5%	NA
Wilmington	88.9%	92.9%	60.0%	100%	81.8%	92.6%	NA

**These data show that, in the overall context of criminal shooting incidents, juvenile victims represent only a small portion of victims, statewide and in Wilmington.**

On average, juvenile victims of Wilmington shooting incidents comprised about 70% of all juvenile victims each year (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Wilmington Juvenile Victims as a Percentage of Delaware Juvenile Victims



*Digging Deeper: Juvenile Victims, Ages 12-17, of Wilmington Incidents*

To match the focus of the reports provided in *The News Journal*, the SAC refined its analysis to focus only on victims of Wilmington incidents who were aged 12-17 years. Almost all members of this group of Wilmington juvenile victims were Black and male (Table 2), mirroring the trends in the overall victim data since 2011 (85% of all victims were Black).

Table 2: Victims of Wilmington Shooting Incidents, Aged 12-17

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017*
Total Wilmington Victims	95	122	144	136	151	147	178
All aged 12-17 years	9	14	14	14	19	27	16
Black	9	14	13	12	18	26	NA*
All 12-17 percent	9.5%	11.5%	9.7%	10.3%	12.6%	18.4%	9.0%
Black 12-17 percent	9.5%	11.5%	9.0%	8.8%	11.9%	17.7%	NA
Proportion of Wilmington Juvenile Victims Aged 12-17 Who Were Male							
All	88.9%	92.9%	64.3%	100%	89.5%	92.6%	NA
Black	88.9%	92.9%	69.2%	100%	88.9%	92.3%	NA
Rates per 1,000 people (Aged 12-17)							
All	1.74	2.66	2.65	2.60	3.46	4.90	NA
Black	2.52	4.01	3.70	3.47	5.11	7.44	NA

\*2017 data are preliminary and through 9/30; victim race, ethnicity, and gender have not yet been determined across all victims.

Table 2 also provides the victim rate per 1,000 Wilmington juveniles aged 12 to 17 and the Black subset of that group (a more appropriate comparison group given the demographics of shooting victims). While available information precludes the Center from reliably establishing residency for shooting victims, these data show that victimization is more concentrated among Black juveniles.

**However, the risk of becoming a victim is not spread equally throughout the City of Wilmington.**

As the map of 2016 Wilmington shooting incidents (Map 1, page 7) illustrates, incidents are generally clustered in specific geographic areas of the City. This is a critical distinction for understanding victimization rates and the risk of becoming the victim of a shooting.

What the SAC's data indicate is that geography matters greatly in examining victimization and risk. If the shooting data were parsed further, juveniles who live in, work in, or frequent one of



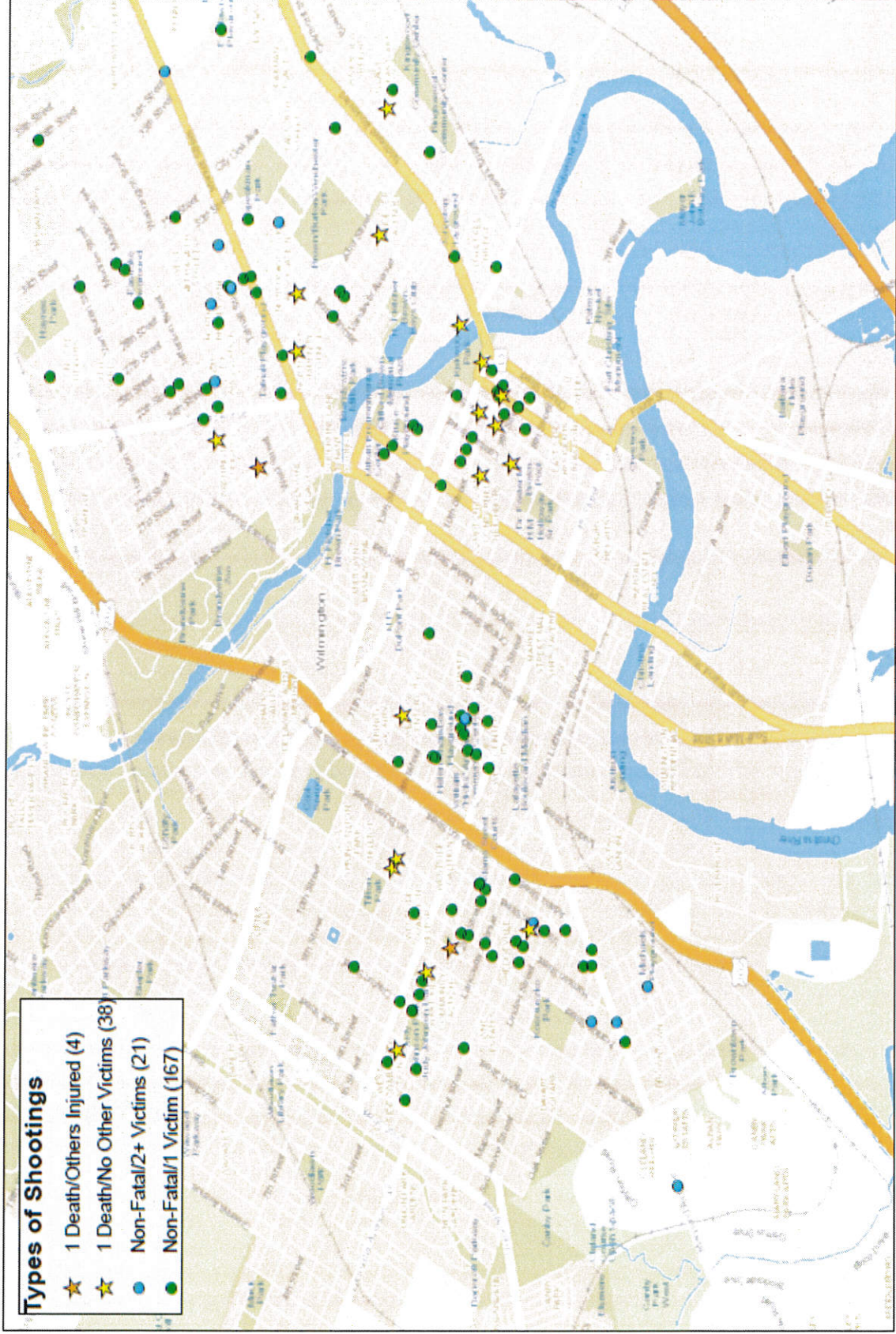
these areas for family, social, or educational reasons, or to engage in criminal activity would no doubt have the highest victimization rate, along with the highest risk of becoming the victim of a shooting incident.

But Wilmington shooting incidents do not take place in a vacuum. Instead, they typically are part of the larger fabric of the crime problem affecting those communities. For example, Map 2 (page 8) portrays both the 2016 shooting incidents (the small circles) and the amount of Aggravated Assault and Robbery offenses (the shaded areas of color) from the Center's 2016 *Crime in Delaware* database. This map clearly illustrates that the areas of Wilmington affected by shooting incidents also see significant occurrences of serious violent crime.

Finally, as mentioned earlier in the report, youth gang violence appears associated with an increase in juvenile shooting victims. An examination of all 2016 shooting incidents provided a conservative estimate that almost 12% of shooting incidents statewide appear gang-related, with 13 of the 27 incidents occurring in Wilmington, 10% of the City's total incidents. Nine of the 13 Wilmington incidents (69%) resulted in one or more juveniles being shot (10 total, 37% of the City's juvenile victims). An additional five juveniles were shot in a gang-related incident at a location other than Wilmington (45.5% of non-Wilmington victims). Gang activity is also apparent in earlier years, but has not yet been systematically studied.

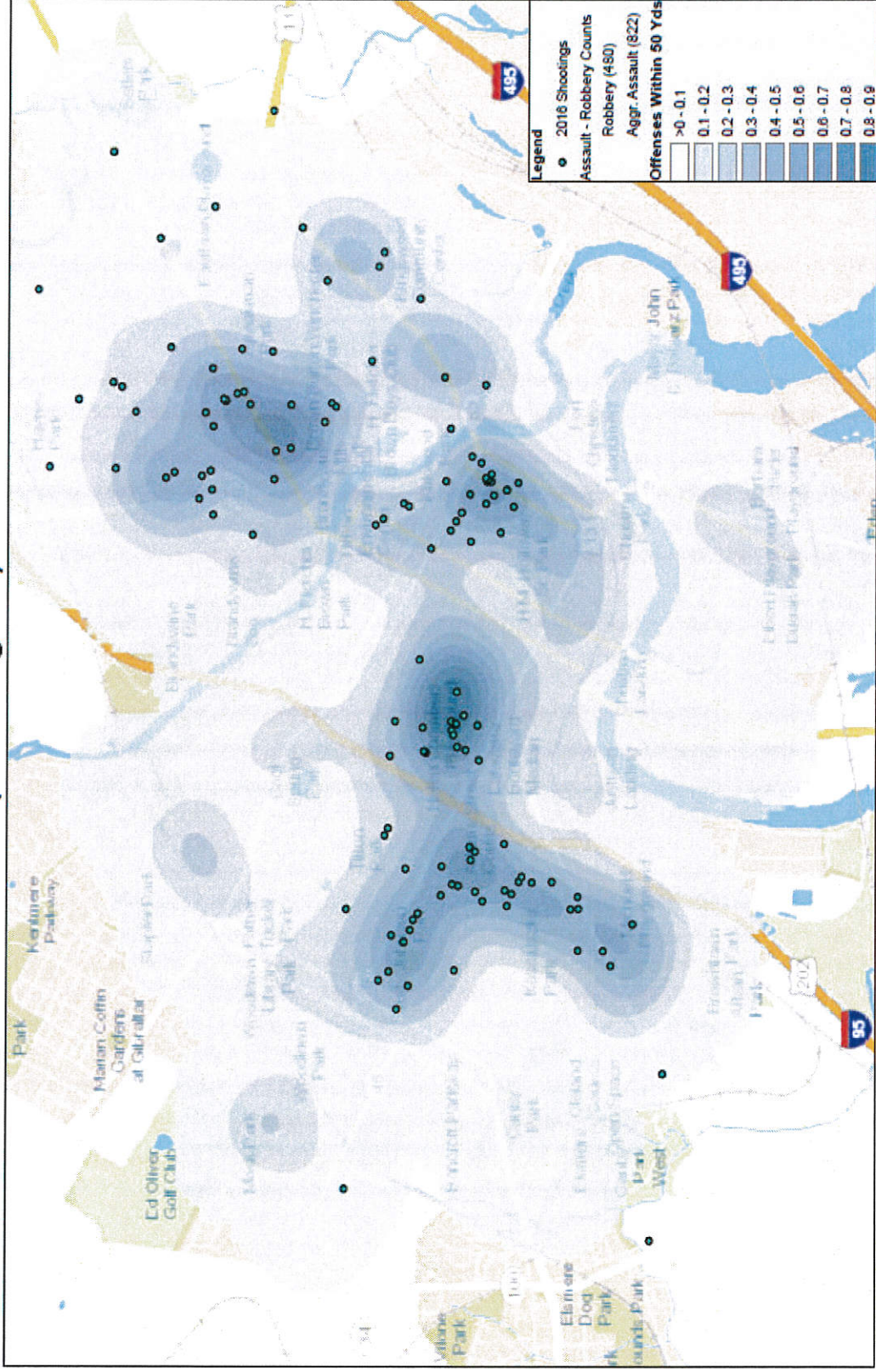


# 2016 Delaware Shooting Locations - Wilmington





# 2016 Aggravated Assault/Robbery Density Map & 2016 Shootings Density Map (Wilmington)



## **Conclusion**

Any criminal shooting incident that results in a victim is a traumatic occurrence for the victim, his or her family, and the community where the incident occurs, especially when the victim is a juvenile. Even a single incident is one incident too many. Developing effective solutions to decrease the number of shootings requires accurate data on the extent of the problem and the myriad factors that contribute to it.

This report explored the issue of juvenile victims of criminal shooting incidents with the intent of providing the most accurate picture of the problem in the City of Wilmington. It is clear that the issue of juvenile shooting victims is nested within the larger problem of shooting incidents that Delaware and Wilmington both face. It is hopefully also clear that shooting incidents in Wilmington are largely localized to certain areas of the City, with the rate of juvenile victimization and the general risk of becoming a victim dependent on a variety of factors including specific geography.