Allegheny County
Department *of*
Human Services

# Firearms: A Lethal Bridge

Understanding the intersections of intimate partner violence and community violence to inform effective intervention

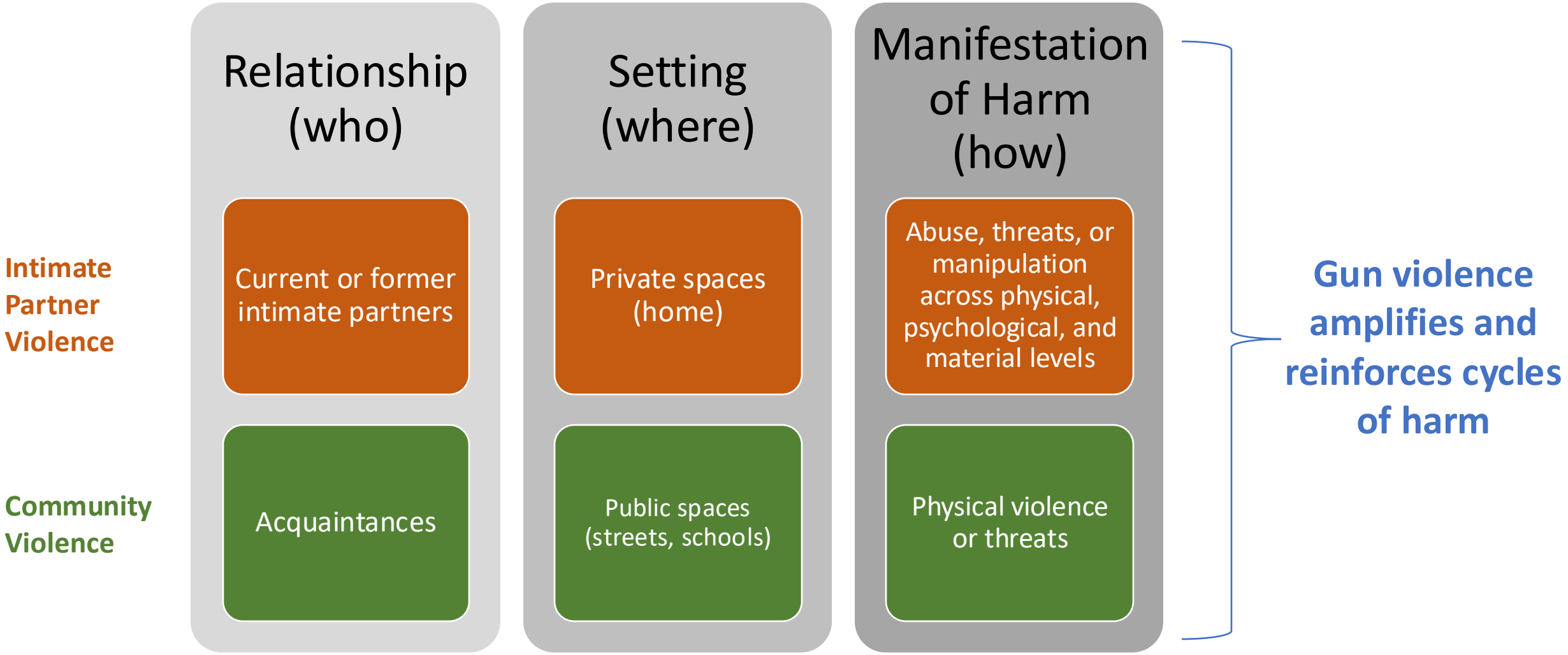
# Definitions:

**Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):** a pattern of behaviors to maintain power and control over another in a current or former intimate relationship. Many forms of abusive behaviors. Occurs in private spaces.

**Community Violence (CV):** violence occurring in public settings, impacting not only direct victims but also neighborhoods and entire communities. Typically occurs between individuals not intimately related.

**Gun Violence (GV):** The use or threatened use of firearms to intimidate, injure or kill. Amplifies lethality.

# Key Distinctions



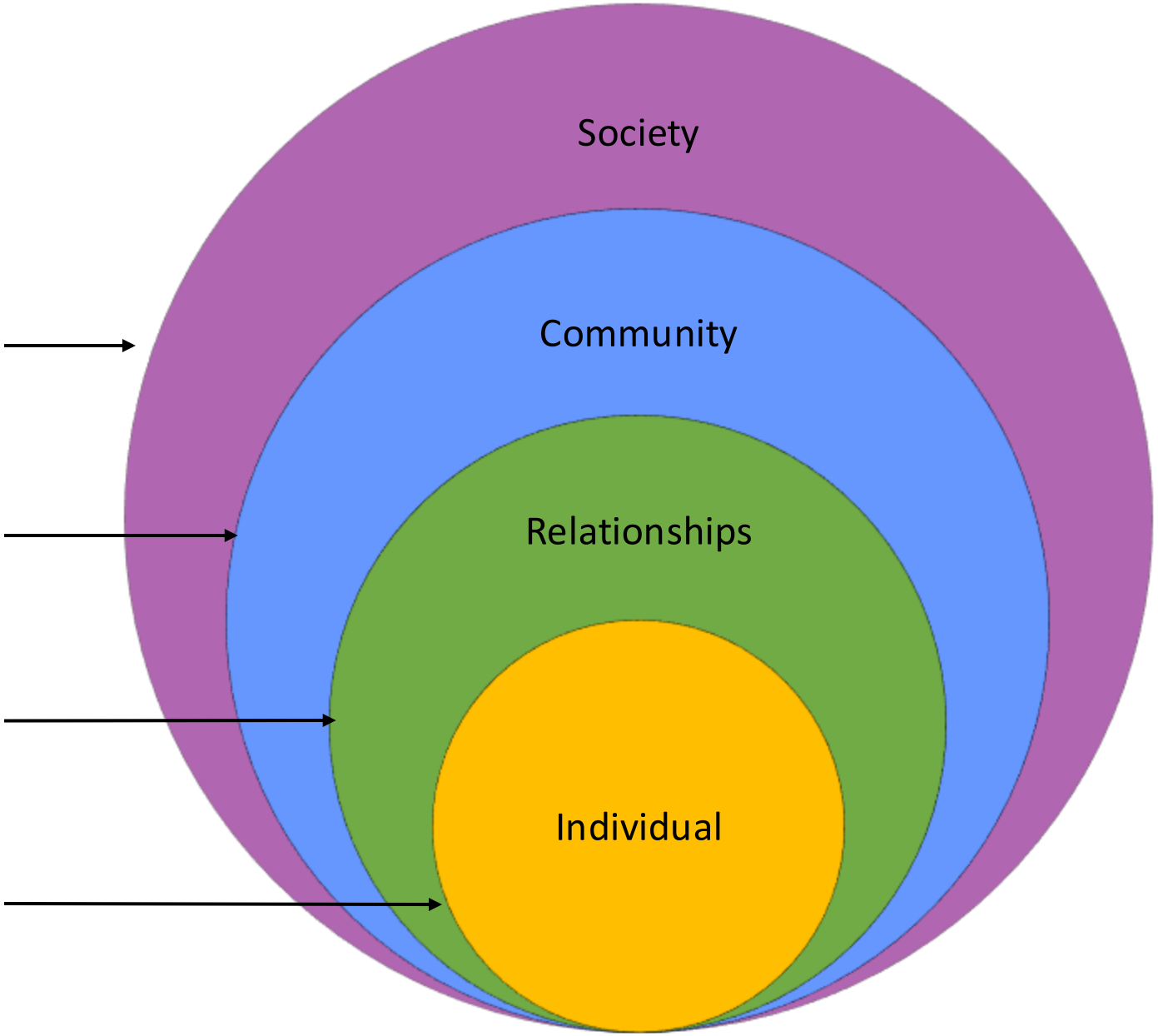
# Shared Roots

- Systemic inequality
- Harmful gender norms
- Cultural acceptance of violence

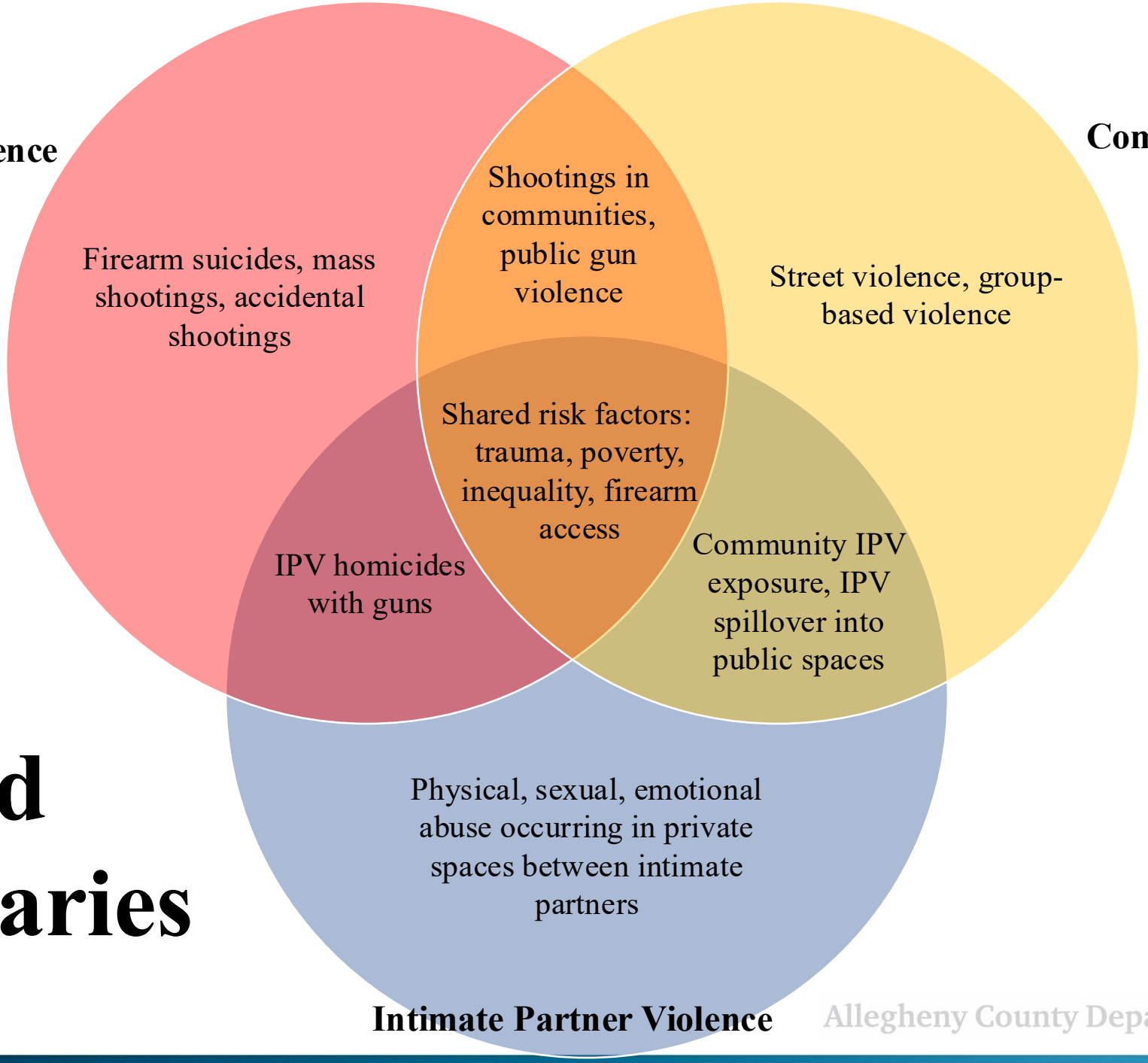
- Neighborhood crime rates
- Lack of safe recreational spaces
- Poorly-resourced schools

- Exposure to violence at home
- Peer influence
- Normalized aggression

- Early exposure to abuse
- Impulsivity
- Substance abuse

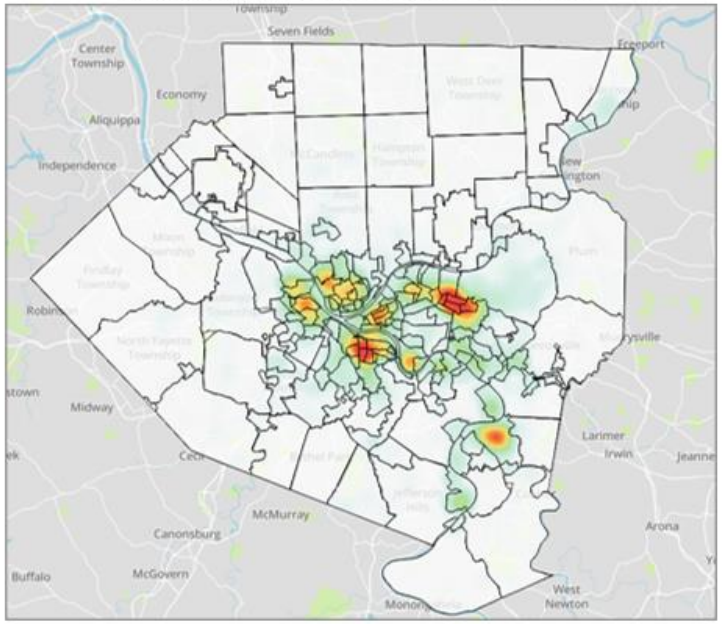


# Blurred Boundaries

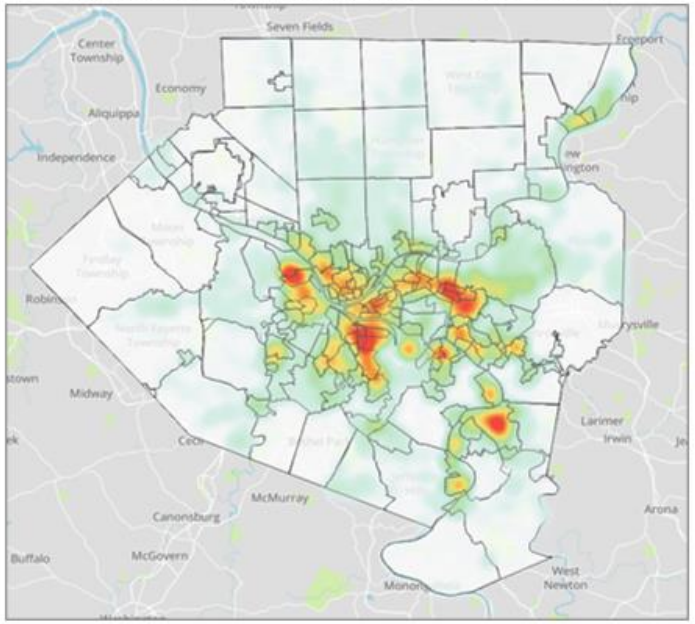


# Violence is Geographically Concentrated

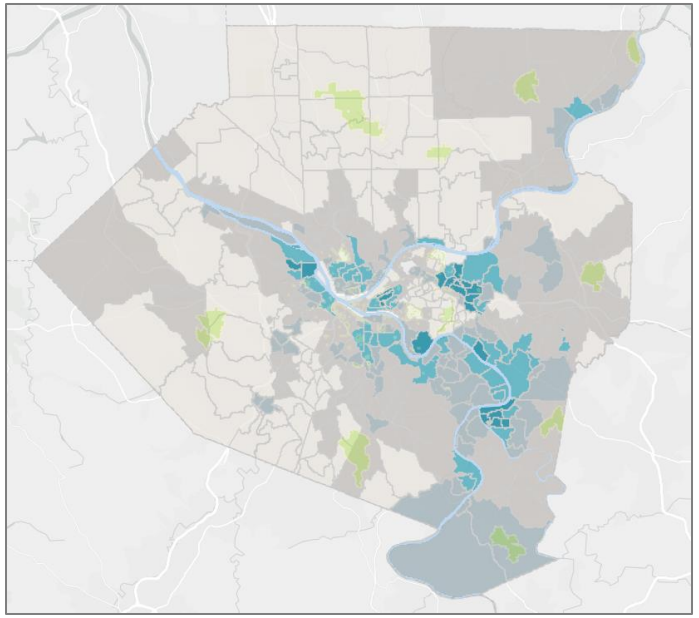
Homicides and Shootings, 2021-2023



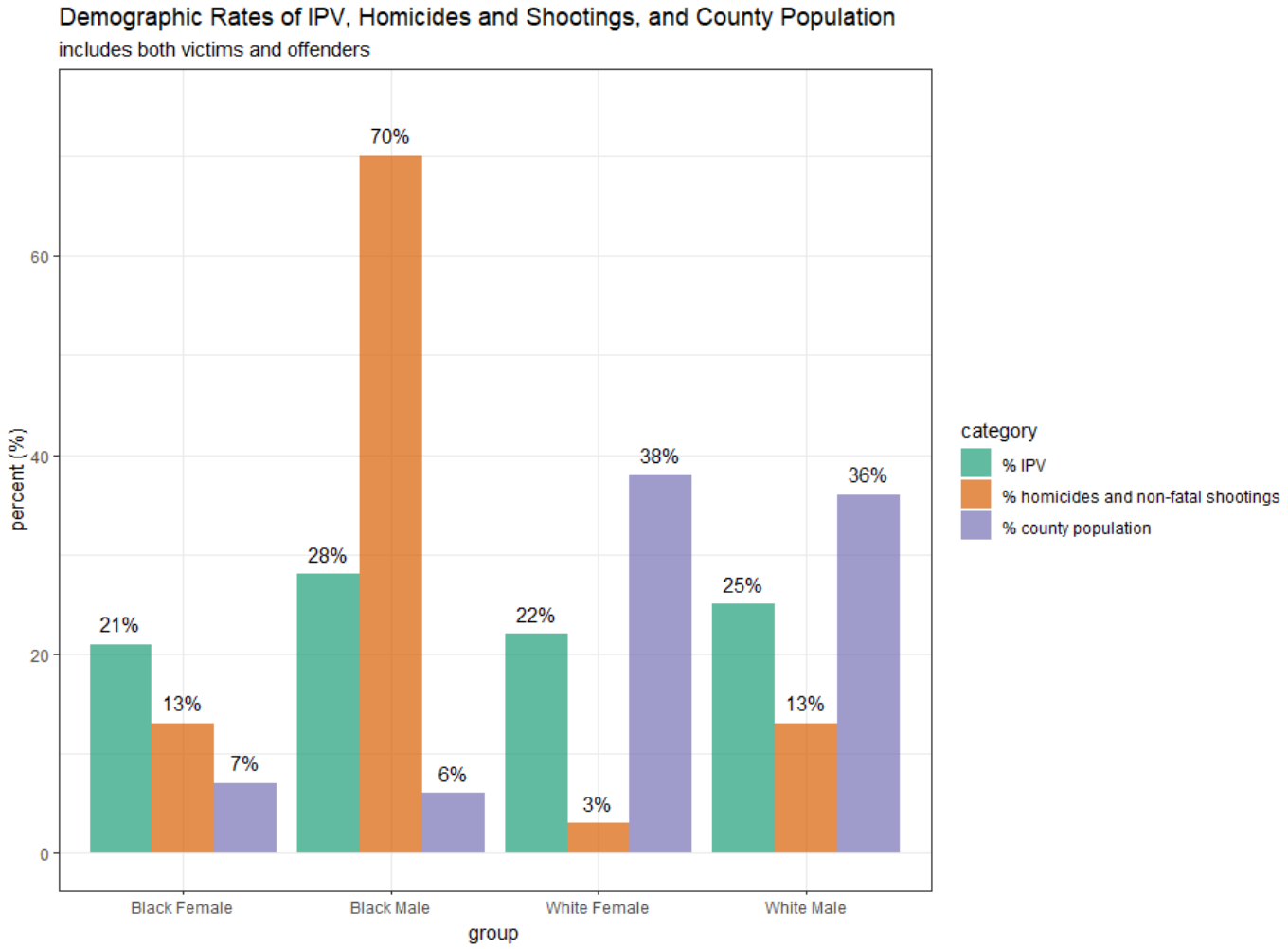

911 Calls for Domestic Violence, 2021-2023




Community Need Index, 2022

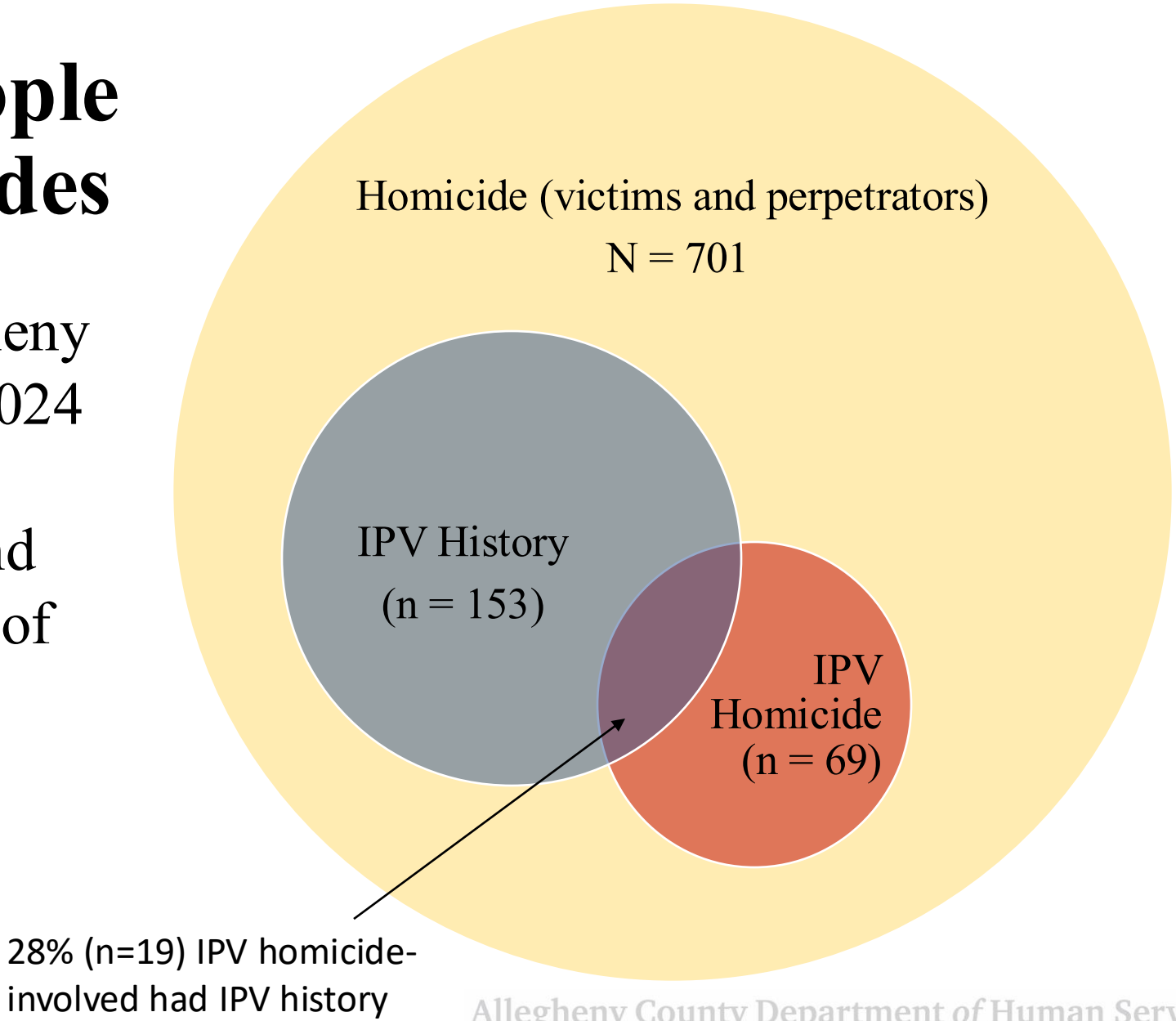


# Violence disproportionately impacts people of color



# IPV history is not uncommon for people involved in homicides

**10%** of homicides in Allegheny County between 2021 and 2024 were related to IPV, but **22%** of homicide victims and perpetrators had indications of IPV history, regardless of whether the homicide was between intimate partners.



# IPV offenders are involved in other violence

**40%** of IPV offenders have criminal histories un-related to domestic violence

**1 in 3** of these individuals have at least one prior assault charge

| Charge Type | Percent (%) |
|---|---|
| Assault | 34% |
| Drugs | 30% |
| Public Order | 21% |
| DUI | 19% |
| Weapons Violation | 13% |

**73% of people involved in IPH had prior system involvement**

- There are potential points of intervention, especially in the criminal justice system and the child welfare system

| DOMAIN | SERVICE/SYSTEM | RATE (%)[22] PERPETRATORS | VICTIMS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Criminal | Jail | 54 | 27 |
| | Criminal Filing | 63 | 44 |
| | Probation | 40 | 22 |
| Family | CYF (Child) | 29 | 33 |
| | CYF Placement | 14 | 5 |
| | CYF Parent | 28 | 33 |
| | Juvenile Probation | 50 | 33 |
| Behavioral Health | Drug & Alcohol | 47 | 34 |
| | MH Crisis | 47 | 32 |
| | MH Inpatient | 20 | 11 |
| | MH Outpatient | 57 | 45 |
| Housing | Homeless Prevention & Supports | 14 | 11 |
| | Homeless Services | 12 | 7 |

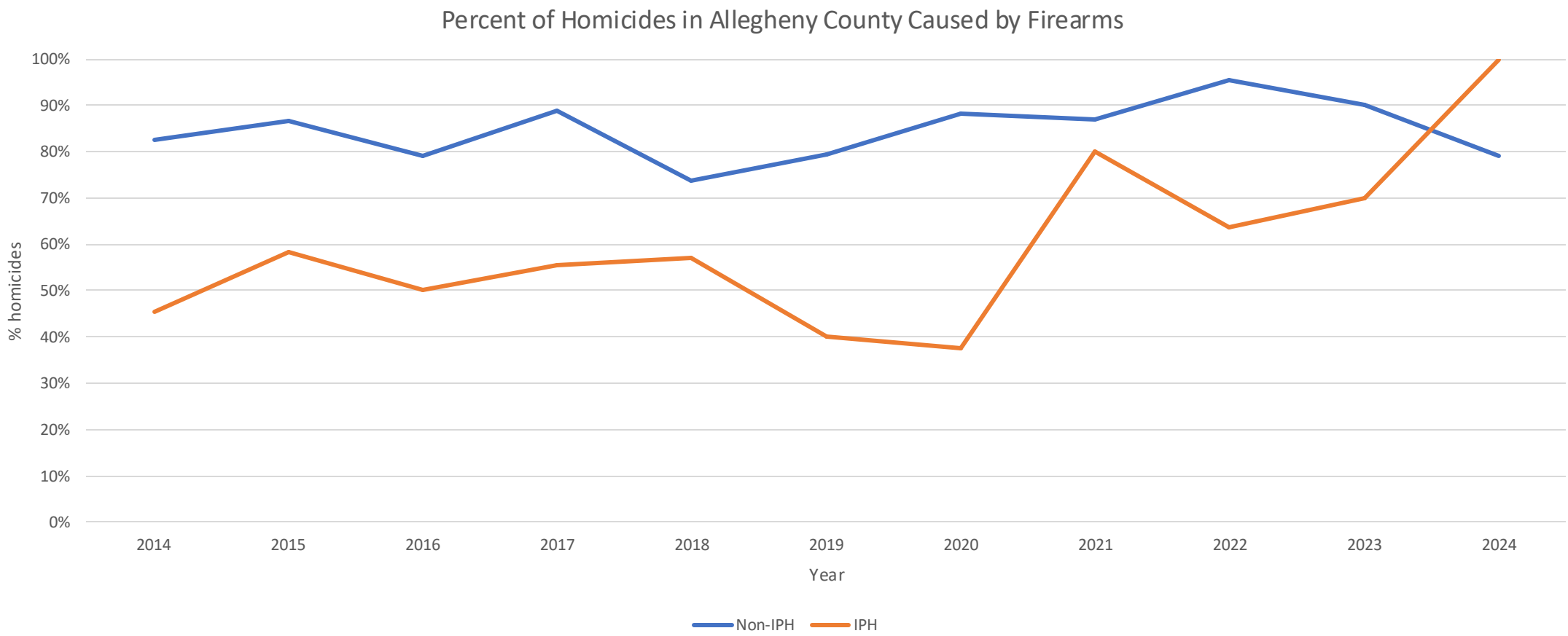
# IPV can trigger other forms of violence

IPV can trigger retaliatory violence

The pervasiveness of firearms increases the risk of lethality

IPV Abusers may harm victims in public spaces, implicating bystanders

# The rate of intimate partner homicides caused by firearms is going up



# Multifaceted problems require multifaceted interventions

- Violence of all kinds has shared roots and risk factors.
- IPV and CV are different patterns of violent behavior, but they disproportionately impact the same individuals and communities.
- The intersection of IPV and CV can amplify lethality. Firearms play a big factor.
- Understanding the overlaps and distinctions can inform more targeted interventions
- Multifaceted approaches are essential for reducing violence in our communities

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# County's Evolving Approach to IPV Response

- Centers survivors while intentionally **focusing strategies on person causing harm**
- Emphasizes a **collective, coordinated** response
- identifying individuals at **highest risk** of continued violence
- real time interventions to stop or interrupt harm
- Prioritizes clear, consistent messaging across systems

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# Questions, Comments?

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