



Toledo fares better than others on shootings

Police official says data show city is on the right track



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At an average of nearly once every other day, someone in Toledo is struck by a bullet.



Proportionally, it ranks Toledo favorably against two of Ohio's large cities.

But the extent of gun violence in several other cities is far less clear. Police officials in those locations do not count shooting victims, and were unsure of the number hit within their jurisdictions.

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The Blade compiled shooting data to see where Toledo stands statewide, as well as review totals for the quieter, less-populated suburbs. The coming summer months are typically when gunfire in the city reaches its highest points.

Lt. Joe Heffernan, police spokesman, said Toledo places well compared to similar-sized cities in the region. Police report fewer shootings so far this year as well.

▪ **To view a database of Toledo-area homicides, go to toledobladedata.com/homicides**

“It’s a good sign that shows we’re on the right track, and our data-driven policing strategy has been working,” Lieutenant Heffernan said of Toledo’s rankings. “That’s putting the officers in the right spots at the right times when our predictive analysis models are telling us that the violence is most likely to occur.”

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offenders in a small area, and follows through with door-to-door neighborhood visits. The Toledo Community Initiative to Reduce Violence identifies dangerous criminals and coordinates alternatives to violence.

Investing in technology to better analyze trends, and pursuing charges of participating in a criminal gang, are also paying off, Lieutenant Heffernan said.

Toledo police specifically track several crimes — such as homicides, burglaries, and thefts from vehicles — that concern residents. It helps prevent potential offenses and serves the public, he said.

Many of northwest Ohio's cities, villages, and townships will go years without a person shot. Totals for all surveyed agencies exclude suicides, but count accidental firings.

Maumee, Holland, Ottawa Hills, Washington Township, Whitehouse, and Rossford reported zero gunshot victims over these five years. Holland's police chief said there has not been one such incident in his more than 20 years at the department.

Perrysburg, Northwood, Oregon, and Waterville Township tallied one shooting victim; Perrysburg Township and Sylvania Township three; and Lake Township and Sylvania five. All of Sylvania city's shootings were unintentional, and Lake Township's victims were entirely from one incident in 2012.



While bordering East Toledo, Oregon has largely avoided shootings within its city limits.

Chief Mike Navarre, who previously led Toledo police, said the large drop is difficult to explain. Many fewer calls for service allows Oregon officers to take a proactive approach, he said.

Across the state, records show Cincinnati averaged 415 total victims each year over this period, and Youngstown had 71. Toledo's rate of shooting victims per 100,000 people falls significantly below the two cities.

Columbus, Akron, and Dayton officials said they do not have the number of people shot. Over a month of requests, Cleveland police failed to provide these annual numbers.

Chief Navarre called gun violence a paramount topic for many. Providing taxpayers this information, even if not required, is a community service, he said.

"If you're going to be hit with questions, I think you're in a much better position to answer than say you don't know," Chief Navarre said.

The Columbus Police Department, which employs three times the officers as Toledo police, investigates shootings with two separate sections. Its homicide unit looks at fatal shootings, and the assault

Records are available for all felonious assaults and those interested in reviewing them, Sgt. Rich Weiner said.

“We investigate the crime. We don’t investigate whether it was a knife, gun, or anything else. That’s why we do not keep that stat,” Sergeant Weiner said.

In Akron, a police spokesman said their data does not show if an individual was shot or not. Felonious assault reports, for example, would include attempts as well as pistol-whip attacks.

Lt. Rick Edwards said this gap does not hinder their law enforcement efforts. Victims do not worry how they were assaulted, but whether police solve the case.

“It’s just the records management system that we have,” he said.

Dayton police said their incident reports are not organized in this way, and denied a records request. A lieutenant there did not return calls seeking comment.

Though Lucas County does not track shootings, Sheriff John Tharp said detectives could recall more than several over the past five years. Better employment rates in the county contribute to fewer shootings than in the city, he said.

Sheriff Tharp said he is now looking into whether the office can start compiling totals.

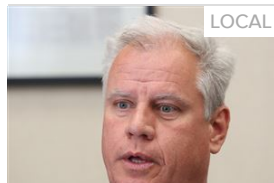


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