

COSTA RICA

Analysis of intentional homicide

January–March 2024



Overview

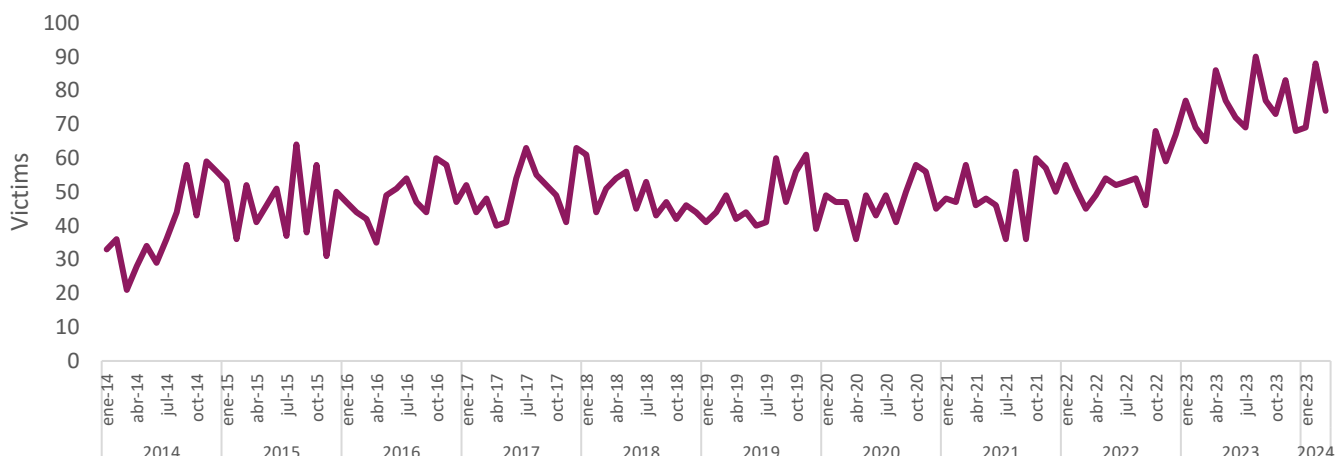
- From January to March 2024, records show 231 intentional homicides. That is 20 more victims than the same period in 2023, as shown by data provided by the OIJ.
- In all, the victim breakdown is as follows: 217 males (a 37% increase compared to the same period in 2023), eight females (23% decrease compared to the same period in 2023) and six victims of unknown sex.
- The average was 77 monthly reported cases of intentional homicides, seven victims more per month than the same period in 2023.
- As for victim profiles, 55 per cent were young males ages 15 to 34, and 75 per cent were Costa Rican nationals.
- By mechanism or weapon, 8 in 10 intentional homicides were committed with firearms, 1 in 10 with knives, and 1 in 10 with other methods.
- As for motives, 56 per cent of homicides were linked to organized crime, 9 per cent stemmed from arguments or disputes, 4 per cent in furtherance of another crime, 3 per cent were attributed to other motives and 28 per cent could not be ascertained.
- In terms of motive, 60 per cent of victims of intentional homicides were linked to drug-trafficking or organized crime.
- Some 66 per cent of intentional homicides took place in the provinces of San Jose (58 victims), Limon (53) and Puntarenas (43).
- The districts of Limon, Hatillo, Turrialba, Jaco, Matama, Batan, Carrandi, Parrita, Hospital, El Roble, Quepos and Purral account for 36 per cent of all victims.

Evidence

I. Introduction

From January to March 2024, there were 231 reported cases of intentional homicide. There were 69 victims in January, 88 in February and 74 in March. First quarter figures show a 9 per cent increase (20 more intentional homicides) compared to the same period in 2023, as per data provided by the Judicial Investigation Department (OIJ).

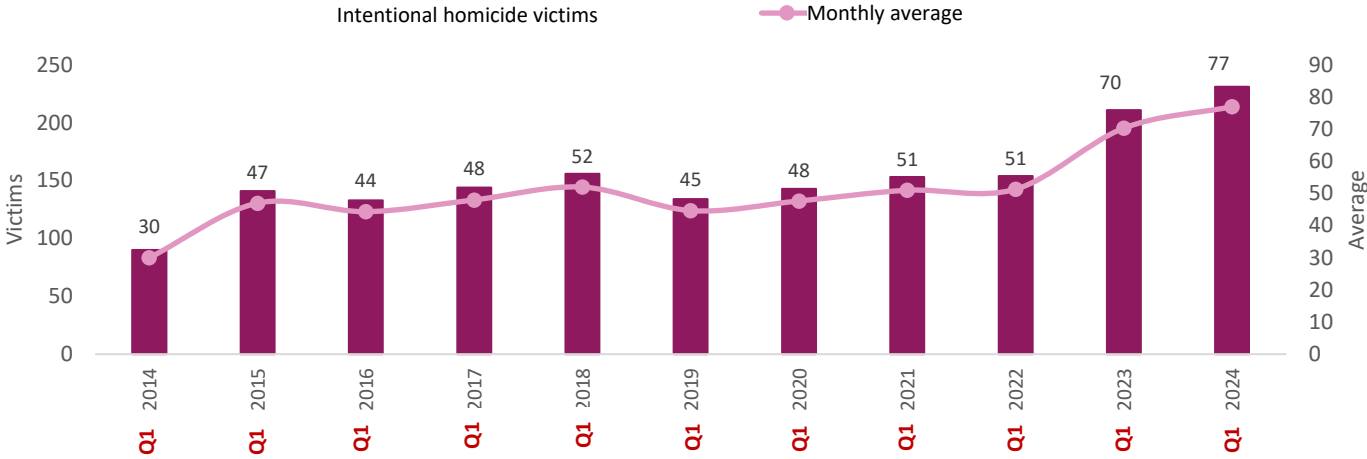
Intentional homicide victims by year and month, January 2014–March 2024



Source: Judicial Investigation Department, January 2014–March 2024.

Comparing first quarter figures from 2014 through 2024, a rising trend starts in 2020. However, by 2024, the average had risen to 77 victims of intentional homicide per month (seven more victims compared to the same period in 2023).

Intentional homicide victims by year and monthly average (Q1 2014–2024)

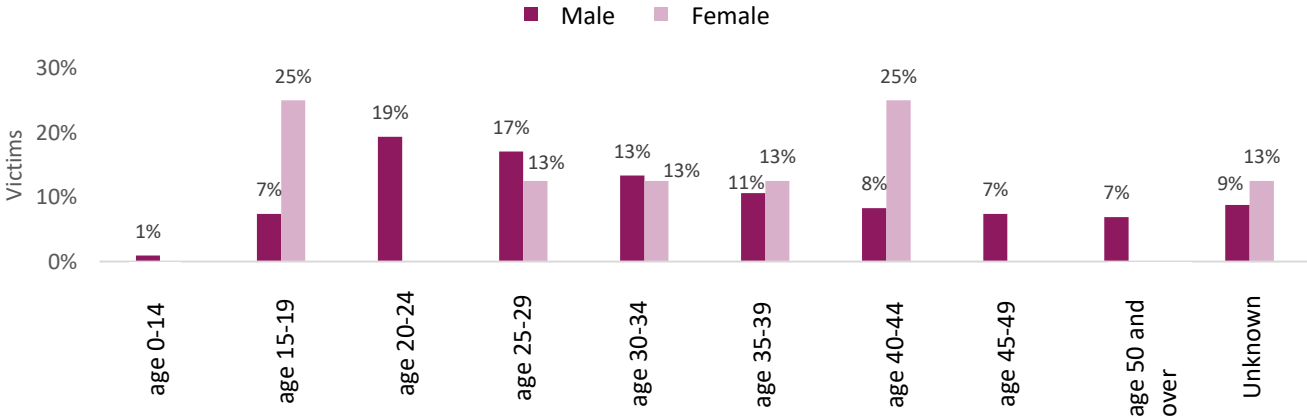


Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first quarter throughout the period 2014–2024.

II. Victim characterization

Disaggregating intentional homicides by sex reveals that 94 per cent (217 victims) were male, 3 per cent (eight victims) female and 3 per cent (six victims) were of unknown sex in the first quarter 2024. Victim ages ranged from 14 to 85 years old. By sex and age, 55 per cent (128 victims) of intentional homicide were 15–34 year-old males.

Intentional homicide victims by age and sex, January–March 2024



Note: six victims of unknown sex were not included.
 Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first quarter 2024.

As for nationality, 75 per cent (174 victims) were Costa Rican nationals, 8 per cent (18 victims) Nicaraguan nationals, 3 per cent other nationalities, including Colombian, Salvadoran, Honduran and U.S. citizens. The nationality of 14 per cent of victims was unknown.

III. Description of the events

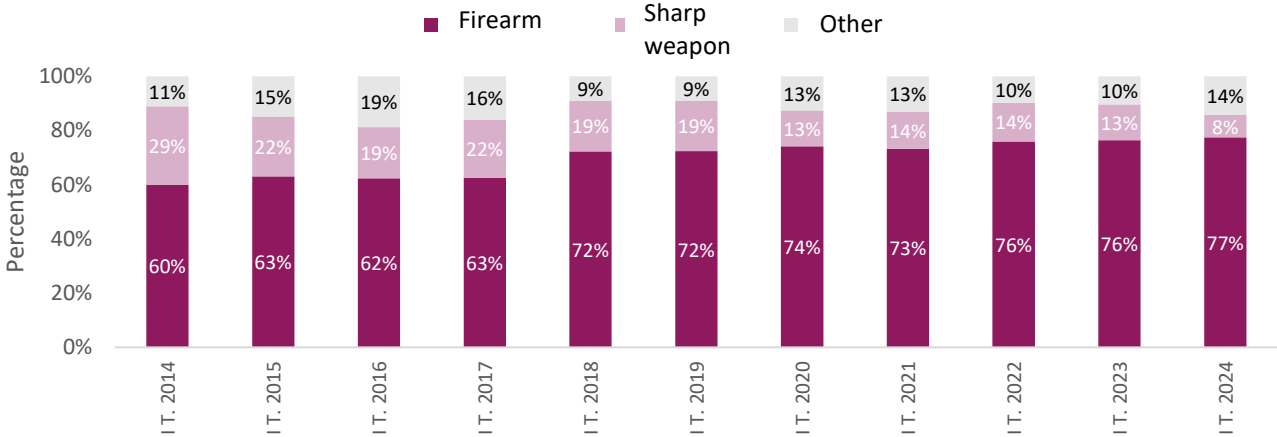
- Mechanism or weapon**

At a glance, quarter one figures from 2014 to 2024 show that in more than 70 per cent of cases of intentional homicide, firearms were used from 2018–2024.

In the last three years (2022-2024), the proportion of firearms has increased, reaching 76%–77% of all cases. So did the proportion of other methods, while the proportion of sharp weapons decreased in Q1 2024.

Specifically during the first quarter 2024, firearms were used in 77 per cent of reported cases of intentional homicide, sharp weapons in 8 per cent and other mechanisms in 14 per cent.

Percentage of intentional homicide victims by year, by mechanism (Q1 2014-2024)



Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first quarter throughout the period 2014–2024.

- Motive**

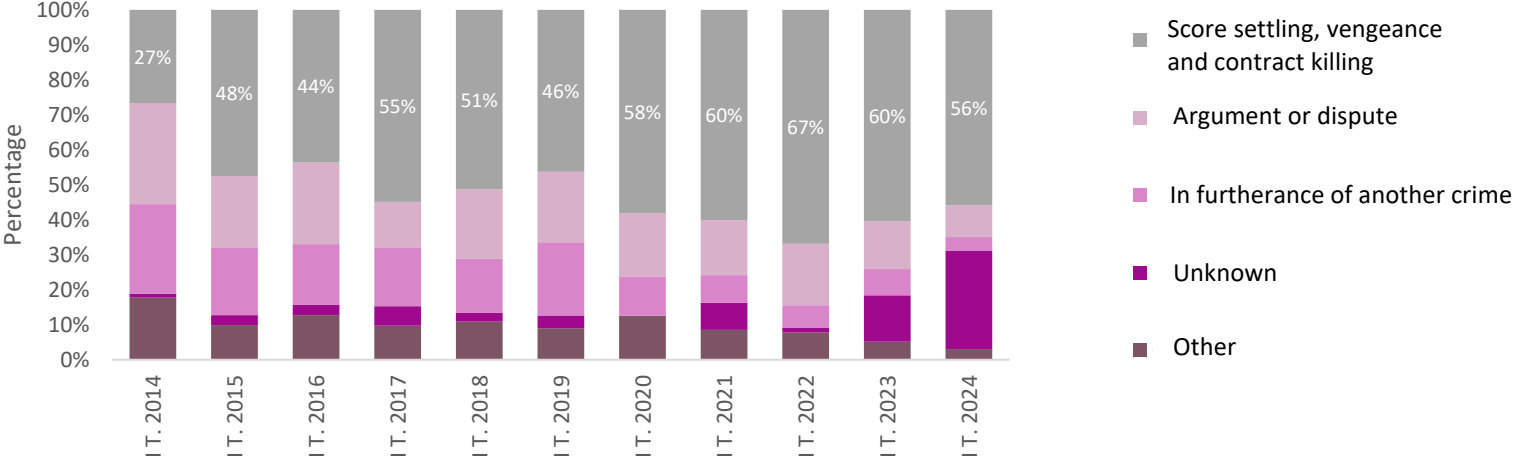
A comparison of the first quarter victims from 2014 to 2024, the categories "Score settling, Revenge" or "Professional" (contract killing) increased significantly in recent years, reaching 67 per cent in the first quarter 2022.

In the last five years (2020–2024), victims in cases of intentional homicide linked to drug-trafficking or organized crime are on average about 60 per cent of the total victims.

Out of all intentional homicides on record in the first three months of 2024, 56 per cent are linked to organized crime, 9 per cent to argument or dispute, 4 per cent in furtherance of another crime, 3 per cent other motives and 28 per cent unknown.

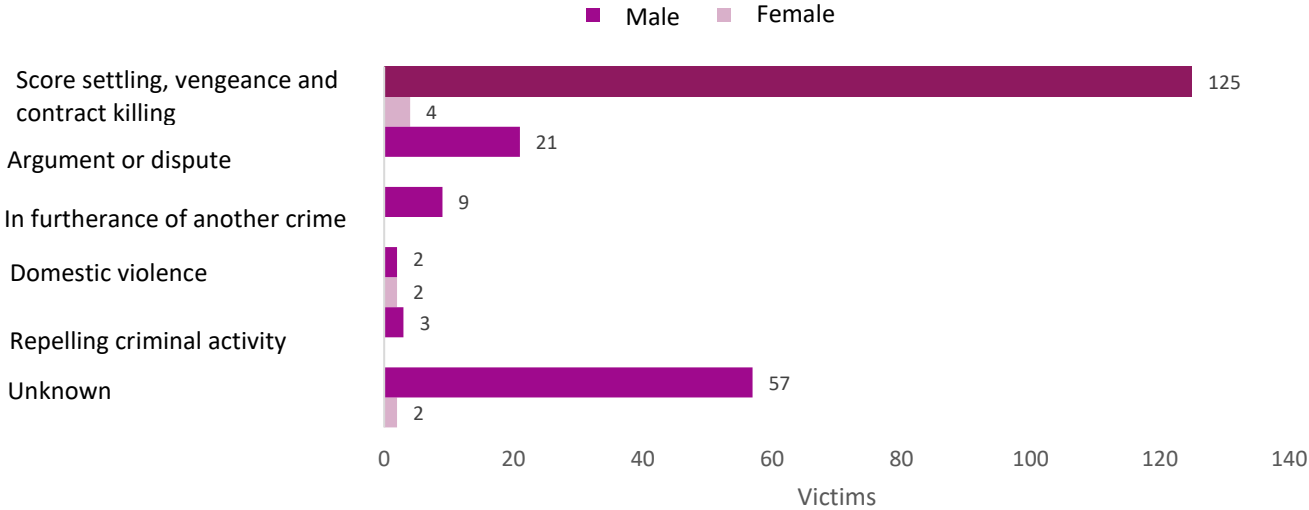
A disaggregation of intentional homicides in 2024 by motive and victim sex reveals that there were links to drug-trafficking or organized crime in 125 male victims (54%) and four female victims (2%).

Intentional homicide victims by motive and year (Q1, 2014-2024)



Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first quarter throughout the period 2014–2024.

Intentional homicide victims by motive and sex (Q1, 2024)



Note: six victims of unknown sex were not included.
 Source: Judicial Investigation Department, per quarter in 2024.

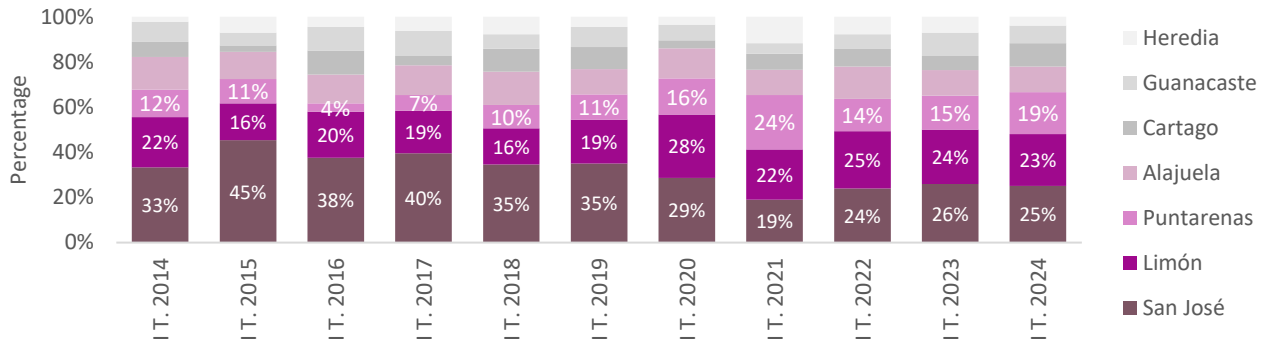
• **Place of occurrence**

A comparison of first-quarter figures during the period 2014-2024 indicates that the Province of San Jose had the highest proportion of victims of intentional homicide from 2014 to 2019. As of 2020, the proportion of intentional homicide in the Province of Limon (28%) is practically equal to that of San Jose (29%).

During the first quarter 2021, Puntarenas Province had the highest proportion of occurrence, with an all-time high of 24 per cent of all intentional homicides registered in the country.

In 2022-2024, San Jose and Limon regained first place, one in two intentional homicides in Costa Rica took place in one of these two provinces.

Percentage of intentional homicide victims by year, by province (Q1 2014-2024)

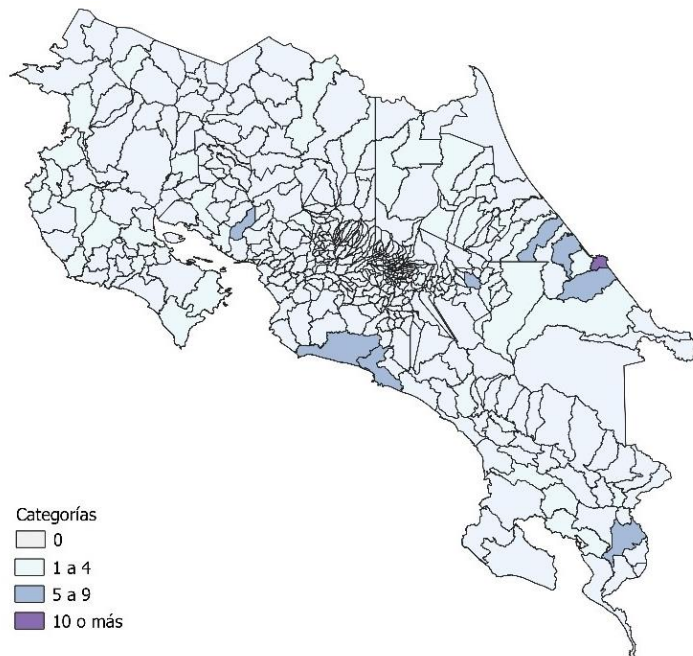


Source: Judicial Investigation Department, first quarter throughout the period 2014–2024.

As regards district of occurrence, the following districts accounted for 36 per cent of the victims in the first quarter of 2024 (in descending order): Limon (17), Hatillo (8), Turrialba (7), Jaco (7), Matama (6), Batan (6 victims, Carrandi (6), Parrita (6), Hospital (6), El Roble (5), Quepos (5) and Purral (5). This is to say that four in ten intentional homicides were recorded in one of these 12 districts.

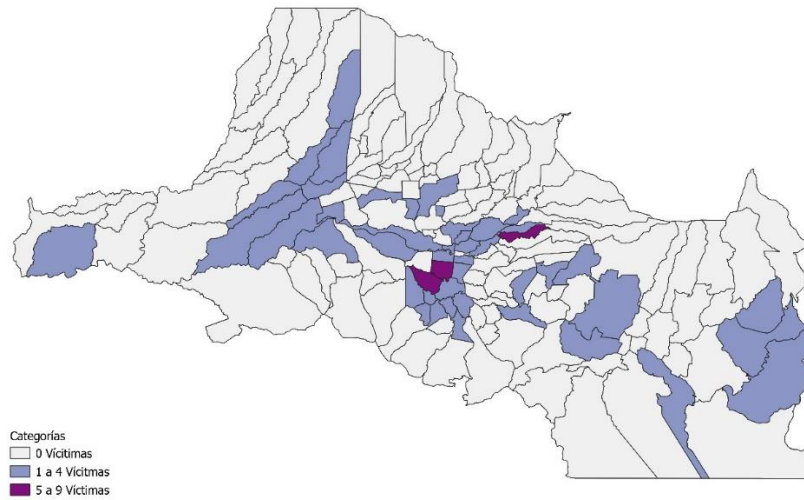
The district of Limon stands out with 7 per cent of all intentional homicides in the country during the first quarter 2024.

Number of intentional homicide victims in Costa Rica by district, January–March 2024



Source: Violence Observatory based on data provided by the Judicial Investigation Department, Q1 2024.

Number of intentional homicide victims in the Greater Metropolitan Area, by district, January–March 2024



Source: Violence Observatory based on data provided by the Judicial Investigation Department, Q1 2024.

Metadata: This report was prepared with data provided by the Vice Ministry of Peace Violence Observatory based on the information provided by the Judicial Investigation Department (OIJ) on 22 April 2024.