

READI Chicago Early Analysis

READI Chicago is a violence reduction initiative providing two years of intensive, innovative programming to men at the highest risk of gun violence involvement. It offers 18 months of paid employment, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and other support services. Wrap-around services continue for six months after the job ends, for a total of 24 months of engagement. READI identifies eligible participants through three sources: community partners, re-entry from the criminal justice system, and a data-based risk assessment.

This document includes current results from the READI randomized controlled trial, which is still in progress. We focus on the two-thirds of study members for whom we can measure outcomes over at least 20 months (the pre-specified follow-up period¹). For the typical READI participant, these 20 months represent two months of initial engagement and recruitment and 18 months of eligibility for paid work and other services. Since this is a partial sample, *these results are still preliminary and subject to change*. As more men complete the program over time, we will continue to update this document and share results with the broader civic and philanthropic community.

Men eligible for READI Chicago are highly engaged despite being at incredibly high risk for violence involvement.

Men referred to READI experienced unusually high rates of gun violence and justice system contact prior to entering the study. Of the 1,536 men in this early analysis, 34% were shot at least once. They had an average of 18 arrests prior to the study. These men continued to be at an extremely high risk of gun violence involvement after their referral. Over 20 months, men in the control group — whose outcomes represent what happens to READI-eligible men without READI services — were shot or killed at 54 times the rate of the average Chicagoan. Even compared to men in their same age group and neighborhoods, READI referrals were roughly 2.5 times more likely to be shot or killed during the outcome period.

Despite facing considerable barriers to participating, men offered READI are highly engaged. Fifty-five percent of all referrals eligible to start work do so within 20 months, working an average of 579 hours in transitional jobs over the 20-month evaluation period. One explanation for such high rates of service take-up may be the income READI provides, though according to staff focus groups and participant interviews and surveys, men stay connected because of the skills they are learning and relationships they are building. For more on our early qualitative findings please see our corresponding 'READI Qualitative Overview'.

Overall effects are not statistically significant at this time. However, on the most serious violence measure — shooting and homicide involvement — our early analysis shows large and statistically significant effects, especially among the men referred by community partners.

Our primary pre-specified outcome is a combination of two measures of serious violence:

- The number of times an individual has been arrested for a serious violent crime² at any point during the 20-month follow up period
- The number of times an individual has been shot or killed at any point during the 20-month follow up period

In addition, we examine a subset of this combined measure that focuses solely on the most extreme violence: shooting or homicide involvement. This third measure is defined as the number of times an individual has been arrested for a shooting or homicide *only* (i.e., excluding other violent crimes), or been shot or killed at any point during the 20-month follow up period.

At this point in the analysis, our overall measures of violence involvement show no statistically significant change. The magnitude of the difference between treatment and control groups in victimization is relatively large: a 14% reduction among those eligible for READI (which translates to a 24% reduction for those who participated), though

¹ See the READI Pre-Analysis Plan <https://osf.io/ap8fj/>

² Our definition of serious violent-crime arrests is Part I violence, which is defined as homicide, manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, robbery, and criminal sexual assault per the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) database.

this difference is not statistically significant. Meanwhile, the change in serious violent crime arrests, a 7% increase (translating to a 10% increase for those who participated), is small and not statistically significant.

Focusing in on shooting and homicide involvement – a subset of the overall combined measure and arguably the most serious form of violence – we find that men offered READI experience a 25% reduction in shooting and homicide involvement. Those who actually participated in the initiative saw a 40% reduction. These differences are statistically significant at the 0.10 level, and are especially large among community referrals. Limiting the analysis to the most extreme incidents in this way was not part of our pre-specified plan, so we regard this drop in shootings and homicides as particularly tentative. Nonetheless, if these dramatic effects persist, it would signal a potentially major READI-driven improvement in the lives of both participants and their communities.