

A REPORT ON

Homicide

in the DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

2001–2004

While the incidence of homicide in the Nation's Capital has declined sharply over the past decade, the city continues to struggle with violence. The District saw its lowest number of homicides in nearly 20 years in 2004 (198), dropping below 200 for the first time since 1986. The overwhelming majority of homicides in the city were committed by handguns (79%), a situation that the MPD continues to address with our partners in the Office of the US Attorney, Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, and others to eradicate.

One of my greatest concerns is the rising number of young people who have been the victims of violence—intentionally or otherwise. The past few years has also seen a disturbing trend in the number of known young offenders: more than 40% of homicides between 2001 and 2004 were committed by individuals 18–24 years old. The Department has put significant resources in place to address this problem, but I believe it will require the cooperation and support of a variety of other agencies and the public to fully overcome this growing trend. As we continue to develop partnerships with youth services agencies, educational opportunities and outlets for positive development, it is my hope that we can reverse the negative effects this problem has on our communities.



Anthony A. Williams
Mayor



Charles H. Ramsey
Chief of Police


CHIEF OF POLICE

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Executive Summary

The early 1990's saw a high number of DC's residents fall victim to homicide – peaking at 482 victims in 1991. Since then, the homicide numbers have been declining. In 2001 there were 232 homicides; that dropped to 198 homicides in 2004 – less than half the number of homicides in the early '90s and the lowest number since 1986 (194). Overall between 2001 and 2004, the number of homicides has continued to decline. While this is encouraging, much work must still be done.

Indeed, homicide victims have been younger and younger in recent years; between 2003 and 2004, the number of youths 17 and younger killed climbed from 13 to 24. Between 2001 and 2004, the percentage of juvenile female victims (17%) was almost three times higher than juvenile male victims (6%). However, the reverse was true for known juvenile offenders – the percentage of juvenile female offenders (3%) was three times lower than juvenile male offenders (9%).

Circumstances surrounding the crime of homicide, however, have remained relatively unchanged in recent years. Between 2001 and 2004, almost one third of all murders where motive was known were drug-related. Guns were consistently the primary weapon of choice—almost 80 percent of homicide victims died as a result of gunshot wounds.

This report looks at the homicides that occurred in Washington, DC between 2001 and 2004. It considers some of the “who, what, when, where and why” of the homicides, and looks at the different programs the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) has in place to deal with this problem.

- LOCATION OF HOMICIDES

Homicides are concentrated in certain areas of the city. Almost seventy percent of DC's homicides between 2001 and 2004 occurred in three out of MPD's seven police districts – the 5th, 6th and 7th districts (the Northeast and Southeast quadrants of the city).

The city's eight Wards showed a similar pattern –Wards, 5, 7 and 8 combined account for seventy-one percent of homicides between 2001 and 2004.

Homicide patterns vary across neighborhoods. Of the more than 130 neighborhoods in the District of Columbia, 35 experienced a homicide count of 10 or more – in other words, 27 percent of the District's neighborhoods accounted for 70 percent of the homicides between 2001 and 2004.

By definition, the Violent Crime Focus Areas (“Hot Spots”) identified in 2004 target areas of the city with the most homicides. The Georgia Ave NW and Sursum Corda Hot Spots reported the highest number of homicides among the Hot Spots comparatively.

Unless otherwise noted, missing information has been excluded from all figures presented in this report

- AGE, GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY EFFECT

Young black males are most likely to be both victims and perpetrators of homicide in the District of Columbia. From 2001 to 2004, nine out of every ten (91%) known offenders was a male. Of those, 44 percent were between 18 and 24 years old. Add the fact that nine percent of homicides in which MPD identified the offender, were committed by a male under the age of 17, and a picture emerges that over half of the homicides in the District were committed by young people, mostly males.

Similarly, blacks are disproportionately represented among both victims and known offenders. Despite the fact that blacks make up 60 percent of the city's population*, between 2001 and 2004, 93 percent of victims and 94 percent of offenders were black.

- WEAPON OF CHOICE

Guns continue to be the weapon of choice in homicides. Nearly eight out of every ten (79%) murder victims was shot to death. The next most common homicide method was stabbing (11%).

- DRUGS ARE THE MOST COMMON MOTIVE FOR MURDER

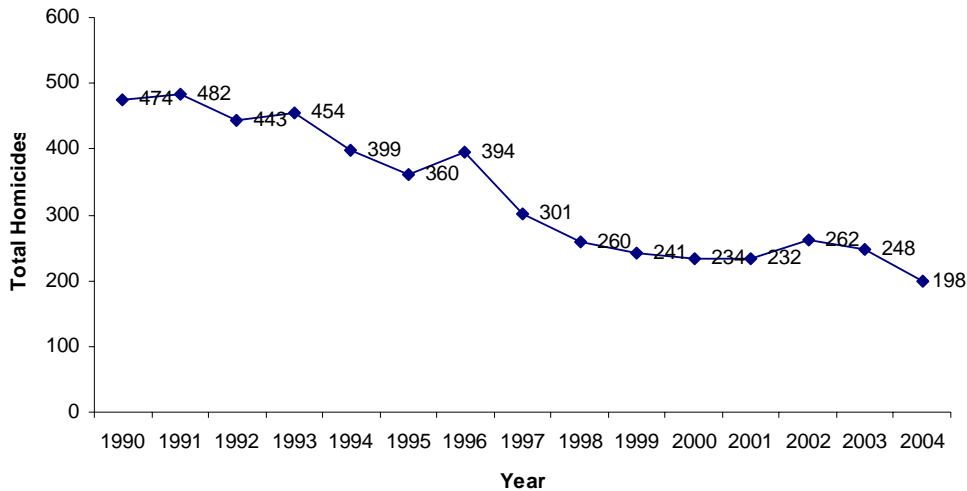
As mentioned above, of the homicides where a motive is known, drug-related homicides represented almost one third (30%) of all homicides in DC between 2001 and 2004. Arguments and disputes were the second most common motive (28%). Although drug-related motives topped the list for juvenile homicides, retaliation and gang motives were higher among juvenile than adult homicides.

- THE CLEARANCE RATE FOR HOMICIDES IS IMPROVING

Through a series of innovative programs, MPD has closed an increasing number of homicide cases over the past four years.

* source: U.S. Census Bureau

1. Homicide Numbers

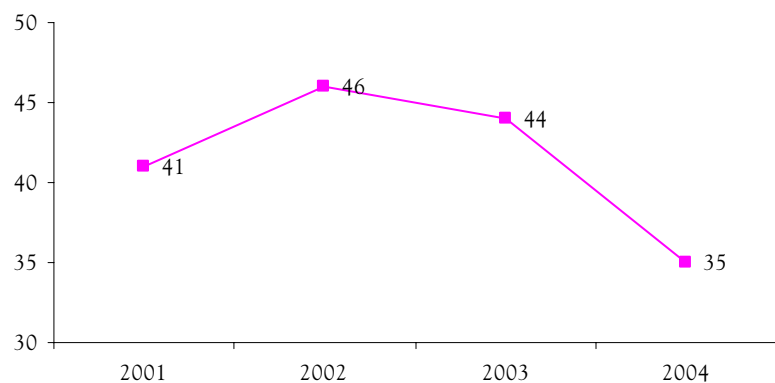


1.1 NUMBER OF HOMICIDES PER YEAR, 1990-2004

As Table 1.1 shows, homicides in Washington, DC peaked in 1991, with 482 homicides. The general trend has been downward in recent years with 198 homicides in 2004 – the lowest number for almost two decades.

1.2 HOMICIDES PER 100,000 RESIDENTS*

In 1996, there were 74 murders for every 100,000 residents of the District of Columbia. By 2001, this number had dropped to 41. Although this rate increased to 46 in 2002, it has since declined to 35 in 2004.



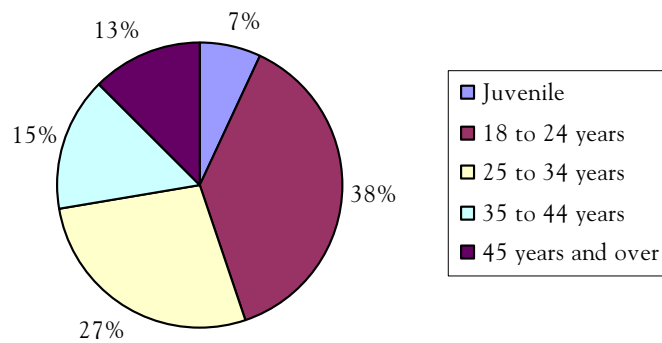
* source: U.S. Census Bureau

2. The Victims

2.1 AGE OF VICTIMS

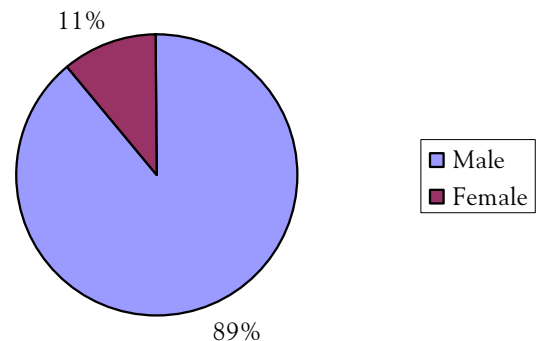
The data show that from 2001 to 2004, 18-24 year olds were most at risk (38%) of becoming victims of homicide. The next largest age group was the 25 to 34-year-olds: more than one in four murders involved an individual in this age group. Juvenile victims made up seven percent of all victims between 2001 and 2004.

Age of Homicide Victims

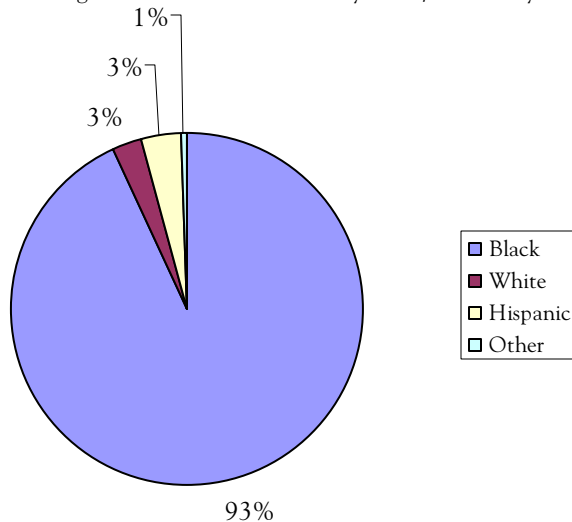


2.2 GENDER OF VICTIMS

Many more males (89%) than females (11%) were victims of homicide between 2001 and 2004.



Percentage of Homicide Victims by Race/Ethnicity



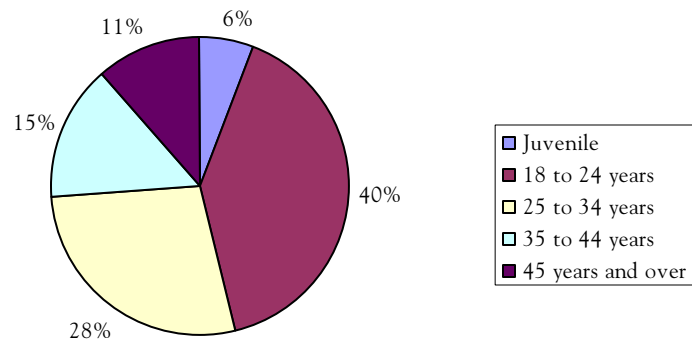
2.3 RACE/ETHNICITY OF VICTIMS

More than nine out of ten homicide victims (93%) during the four-year period were black. Hispanic and white victims accounted for three percent of homicide victims each; the remaining 1 percent included other minorities.

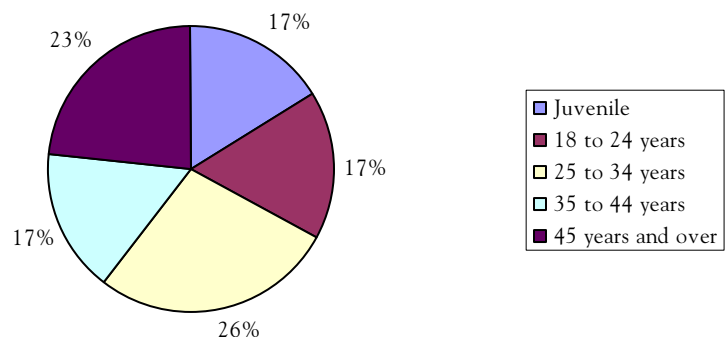
2.4 AGE OF MALE AND FEMALE VICTIMS

There was much more variance in age among female victims of homicide than male victims. While the number of male homicide victims peaked at 18 to 24 years old (40%) then steadily decreased in the older age categories, the number of female homicide victims peaked in the 25 to 34 (26%) and 45+ age groups (23%). An equal percentage of females killed were 17 years of age or younger, as were young adults or those in their late 30s/early 40s. Although the percentage of juvenile female victims was almost three times that of juvenile male victims, male victims tended to be younger: 46 percent of male victims were 24 years of age or younger versus 34 percent of female victims.

Age of Male Victims

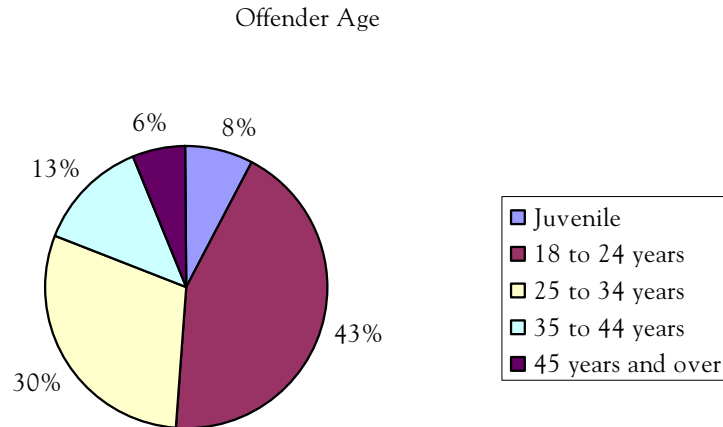


Age of Female Victims



3. The Offenders*

*The following figures represent statistics on individuals identified as having committed homicides between 2001 and 2004. The analysis accounts for only the first suspect identified as being involved in the case. Subsequent arrests for the same offense are not reflected in this report.



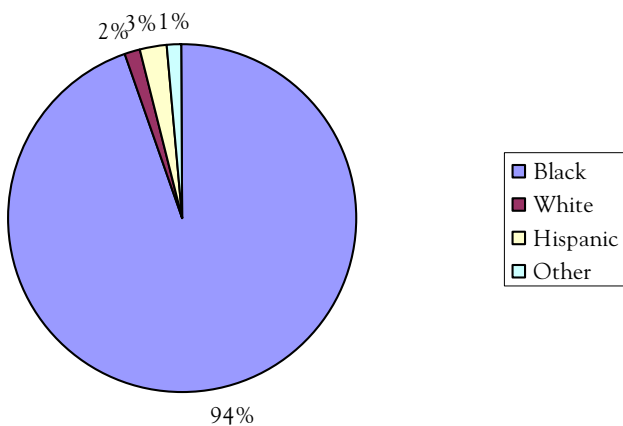
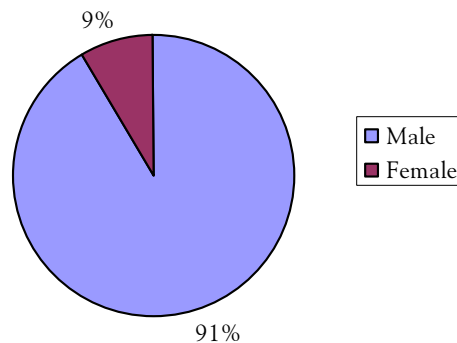
3.1 AGE OF OFFENDERS

As stated earlier, known offenders were overwhelmingly young adults (198). Of the known offenders linked to homicides committed between 2001 and 2004, almost half (43%) were between 18 and 24 years of age. Nearly one-third (30%) were between 25 and 34 years of age. Interestingly, at both ends of the age spectrum, the number of juvenile offenders (30) and offenders 45 and older (24) were almost equal.

3.2 GENDER OF OFFENDERS

Like their victims, an overwhelming majority (91%) of those identified as having committed a homicide between 2001 and 2004 were male. Only nine percent of offenders were female.

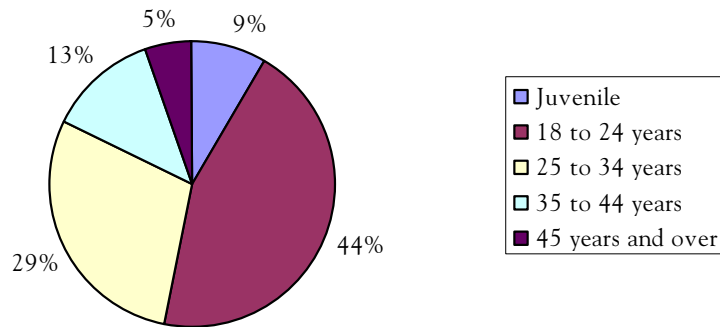
Offender by Gender



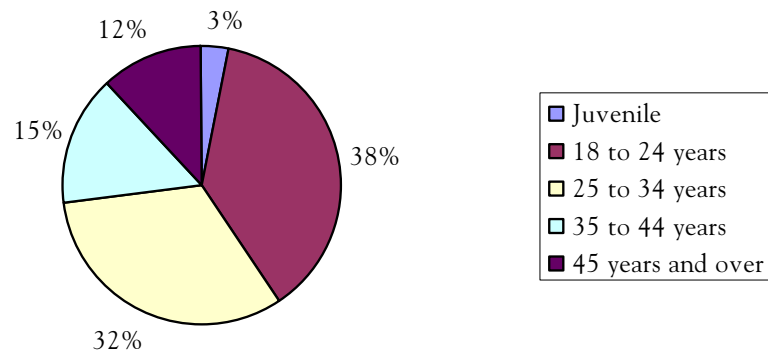
3.3 RACE/ETHNICITY OF OFFENDERS

The vast majority (94%) of known offenders from 2001 to 2004 were black. Hispanics made up three percent of known offenders and whites two percent. The remaining one percent of known offenders represented other minority groups.

Age of Male Offenders



Age of Female Offenders

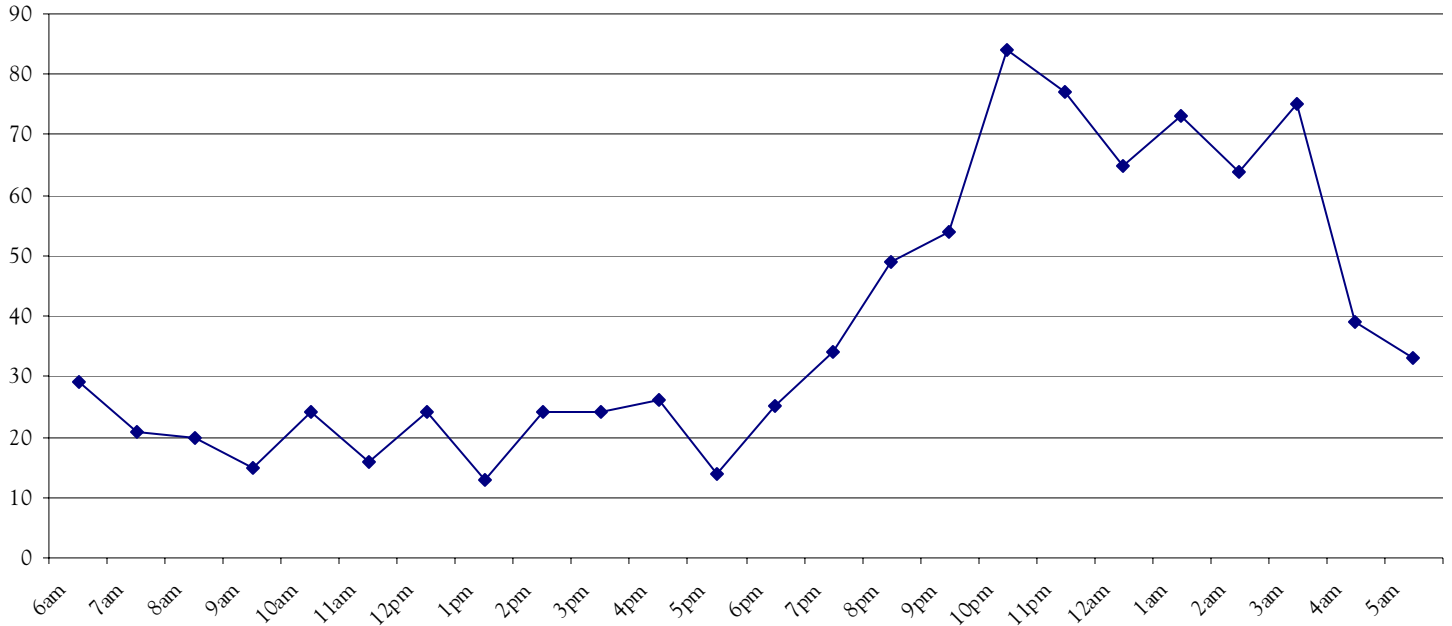


3.5 AGE AND GENDER OF OFFENDERS

Both male and female offenders were more likely to be young adults—offenders in the 18–24 year age group represented the largest percentage of both male (44%) and female (38%) offenders. Unlike their victim counterparts, however, there were three times as many juvenile male offenders than juvenile female offenders.

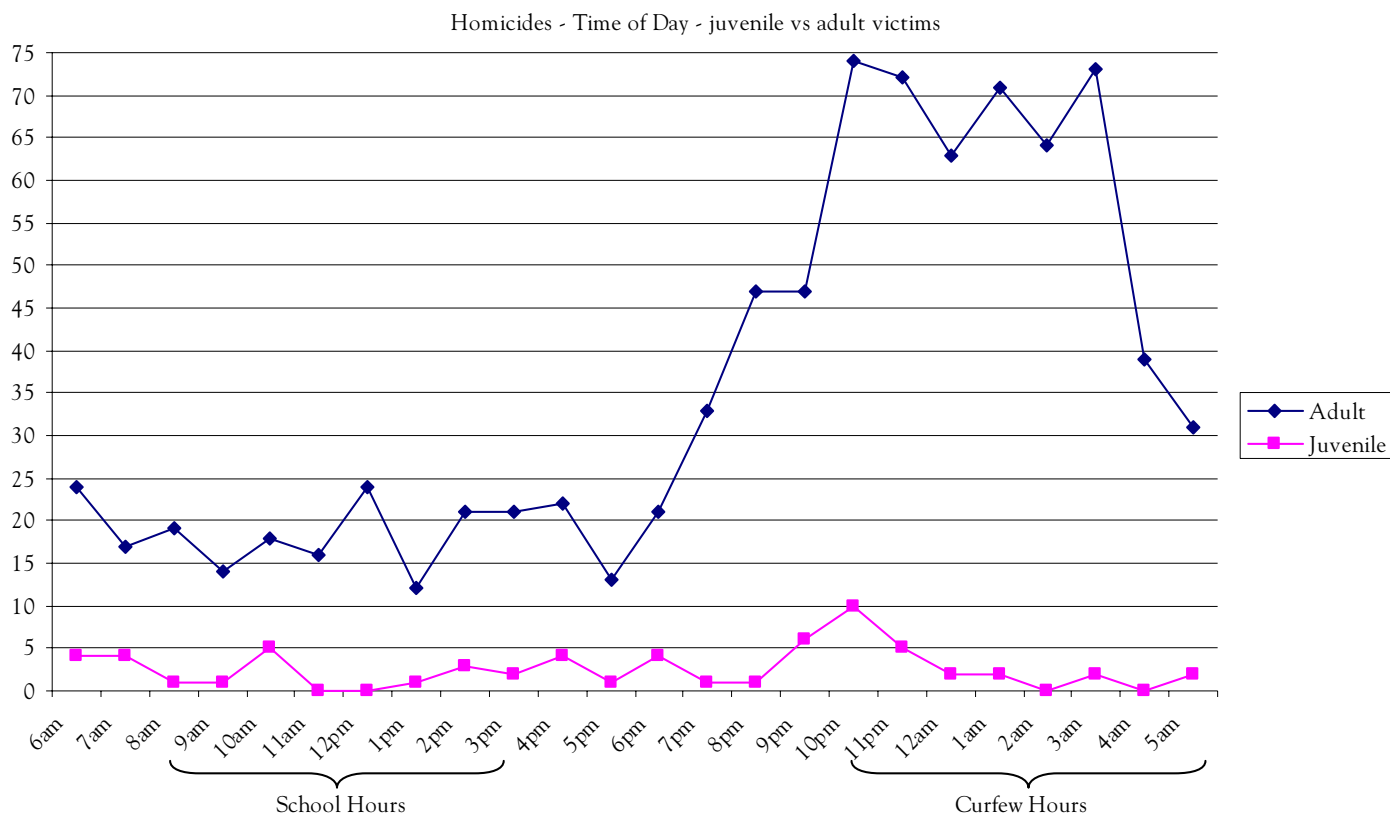
4. The Crime

Homicides - Time of Day



4.1 WHEN HOMICIDES OCCUR: TIME OF DAY

Homicides typically occur in the late evening and early morning hours, with the majority (52%) occurring between 8:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. There was also a steady increase leading up to the late evening hours, beginning around 5:00 p.m. The fewest homicides occurred between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

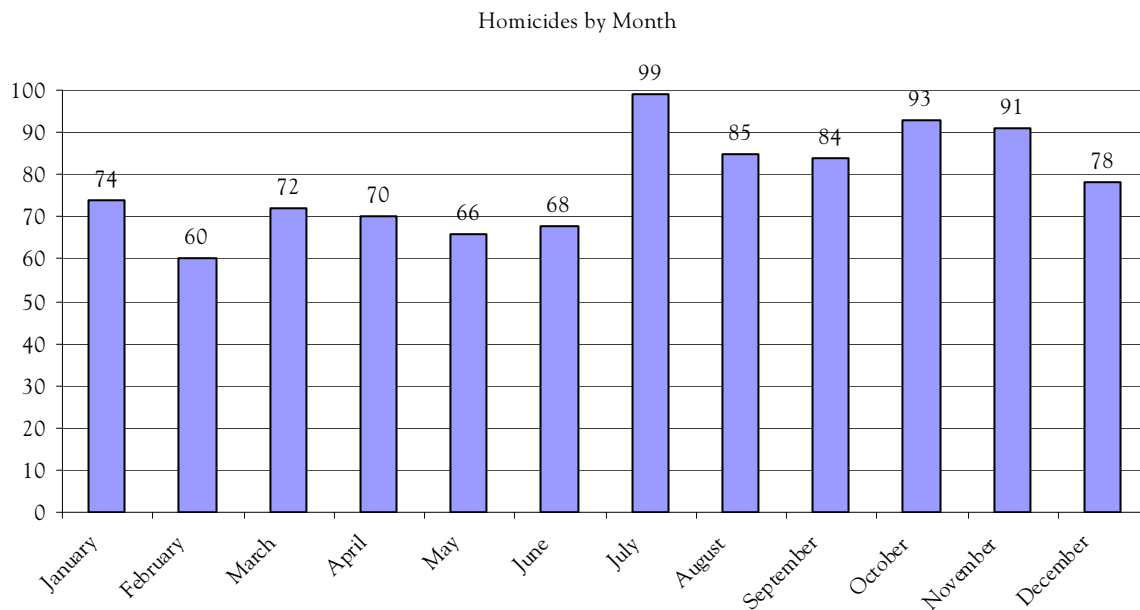


4.2 TIME OF DAY - JUVENILE VICTIMS COMPARED TO ADULT VICTIMS

There was less differentiation between the times of day juvenile homicides occurred than for their adult counterparts. Juvenile homicides increased after 8:00p.m. and peaked at 10:00 p.m. before declining again.

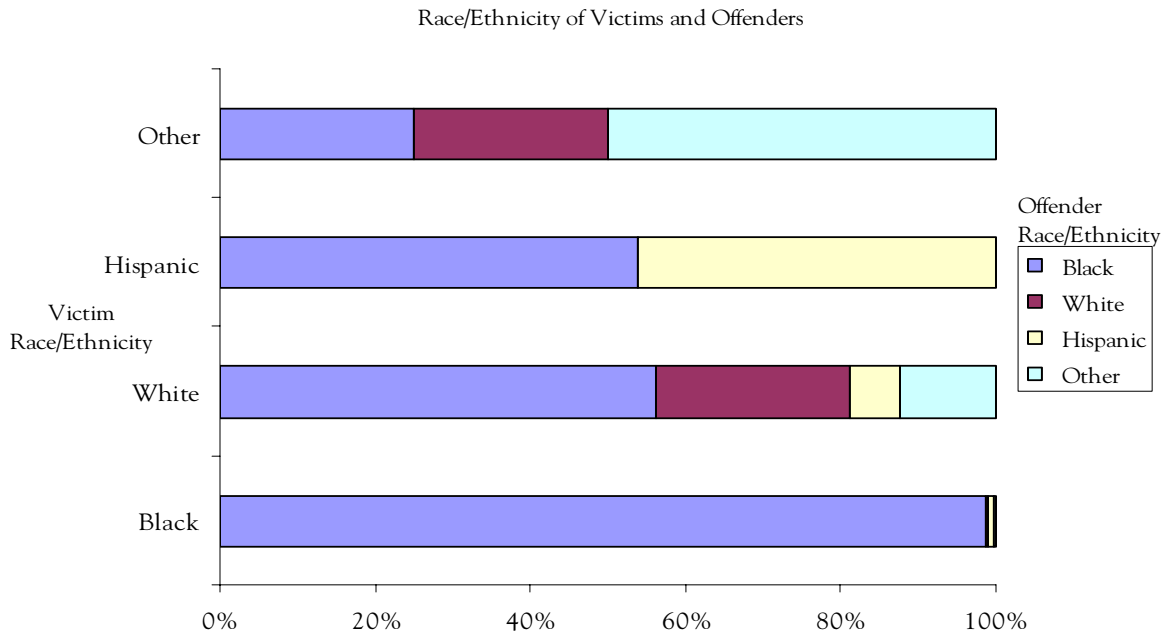
The District of Columbia has a curfew in place for juveniles. The Juvenile Curfew Act 1995 (DC Code 6-2181) states that persons under the age of 17 cannot remain in or on a street, park or other outdoor public place, in a vehicle or on the premises of any establishment within the District of Columbia during curfew hours, unless they are involved in certain exempted activities. Exempted activities include work, school, religious, civic or organized recreational activities, as well as the exercise of First Amendment rights. The law applies to all young people who are in the District during city curfew hours, regardless of whether they live in the District.

From September through June, curfew begins at 11:00pm Sunday through Thursday nights, and continues until 6:00am the following day; curfew runs from 12:01am-6:00am on Saturday and Sunday. During the months of July and August, curfew hours are 12:01am to 6:00am, seven days a week.



4.3 WHEN HOMICIDES OCCUR: MONTH OF YEAR

Most homicides occurred in the latter half of the year (July through December)—peaking during the months of July, October and November. The incidence of these crimes remained relatively steady throughout the rest of the year, with the fewest occurring in February.



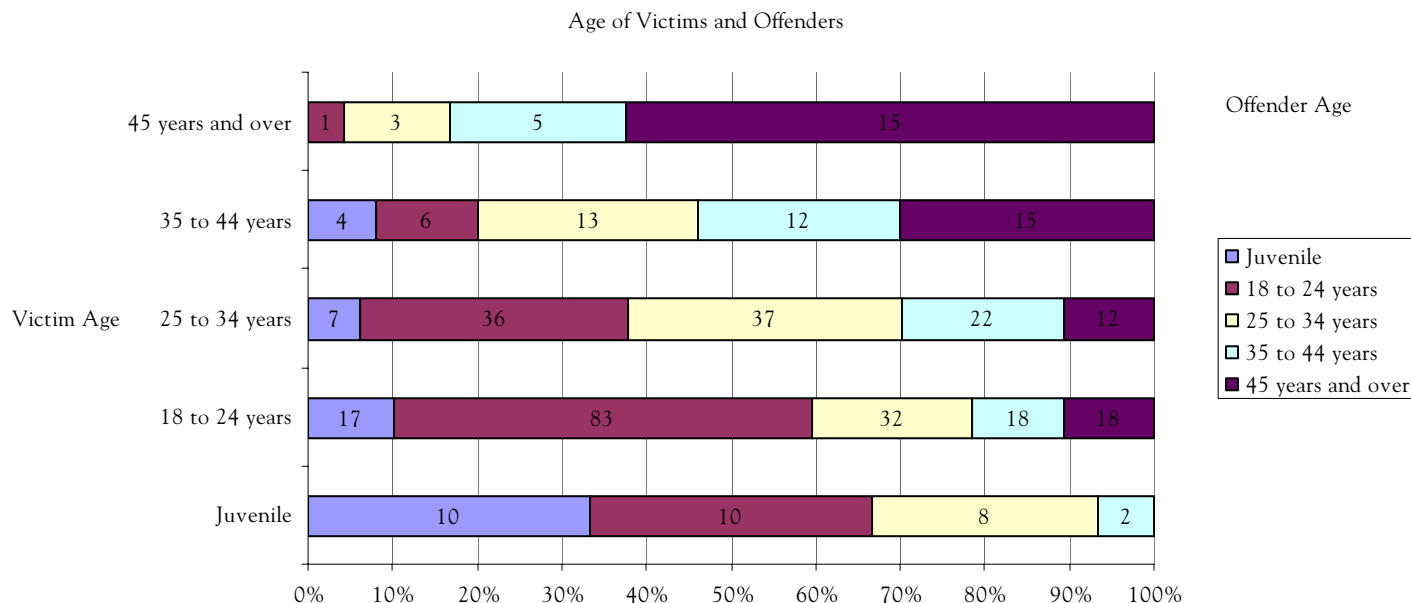
4.4 RACE/ETHNICITY: VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS

Between 2001 and 2004, homicide in the District of Columbia was intra-racial in nature for black victims and offenders alone. Other racial groups, however, did not display an intra-racial pattern to their homicide incidents. Hispanic victims and victims of other (non-White) races were just as likely to be killed by a member of their race as a member of another race. Whites, on the other hand, were more likely to be killed by an offender from another (non-White) racial group.

4.5 GENDER: VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS



Given the fact that the majority of known offenders were male, it is not surprising that both male and female victims were more likely to be murdered by a male. Almost all homicides in DC between 2001 and 2004 were male-on-male homicides. Eighty-seven percent of male victims (312), and 76 percent of female victims (45), were killed by a male. Females murdered relatively few people compared to males – their victims were also more likely to be male (20), although the difference was less striking.



4.6 AGE: VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS

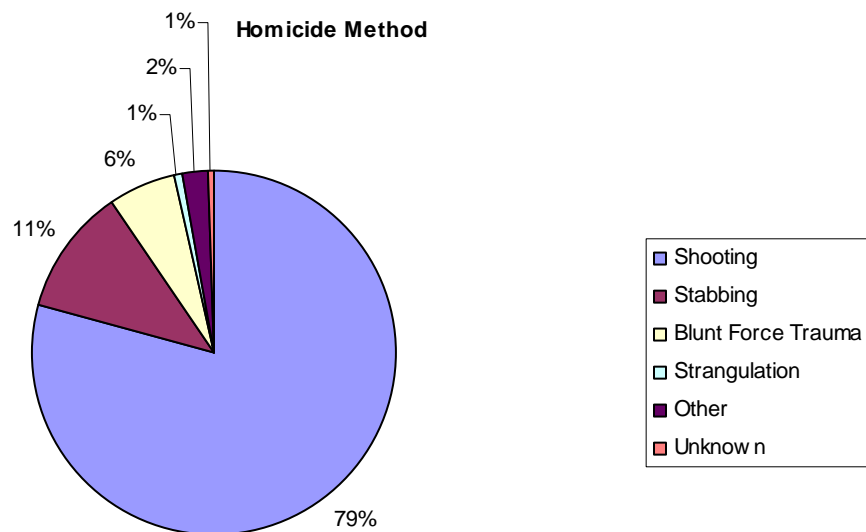
Analysis shows that the age relationship between victims and offenders was not necessarily intra-age in nature. Although offenders between the ages of 18 and 24 usually murdered someone within their own age group, victims in the 25 to 34 year-old category were just as likely to be killed by someone in the 18 to 24 year-old category as their own age group. There was also much less variation in the older offenders category: those 45 and older killed almost the same number of people in their own age group as those much younger than them. Juveniles were more likely to kill another juvenile (10), or someone aged 18 to 24 (17), than older individuals.

5. The Method

5.1 THE METHOD OF HOMICIDES

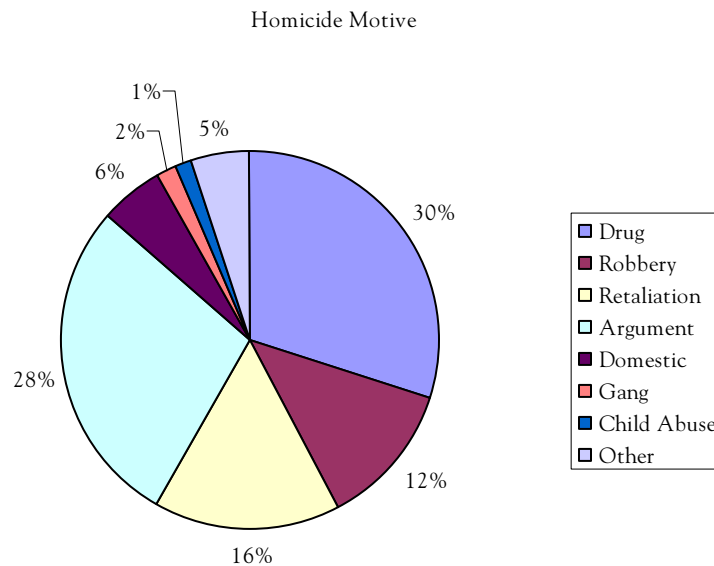
Gunshot wounds claimed the lives of 79 percent of all homicide victims between 2001 and 2004. The next most common method was stabbing at 11 percent. Blunt force trauma constituted six percent of homicides, strangulation one percent of all homicides and one percent had an unknown method.

The “other” method used in the remaining two percent of homicides included asphyxiation, anthrax poisoning, arson, drowning, neglect, shaken baby syndrome, smoke inhalation and starvation.



6. The Motives

Motives can be complex and inter-related. Investigators may therefore assign a primary and secondary motive to the case. Since the majority of secondary motives are "unknown", for the purposes of this report "motive" refers to the primary motive.



6.1 MOTIVES

Of the 940 homicides that occurred between 2001 and 2004, motives are known in 767 (82%) of those cases – 173 (18%) are unknown. Almost one third (30%) of known motives between 2001 and 2004 involved some sort of drug activity. This includes drug deals gone bad, turf wars over drug dealing, robbery for drugs and drug debts. Arguments make up the next most common known motive (28%) while 16 percent were for retaliation and 12 percent for robbery.

The remaining homicide motives included gang-related murders, child abuse, domestic abuse, sexual crimes and others that are not easily classified, including arson, assassination, witness execution, burglary, mistaken identity and terrorism (the "DC Sniper" murder).

Note: Data on motives must be interpreted with caution. As a homicide case is investigated, new information may change the motive originally attributed to the situation. In cases where the offender is not caught or does not confess their reason for murdering their victims, investigators must interpret the motive. In addition, there may be more than one motive.

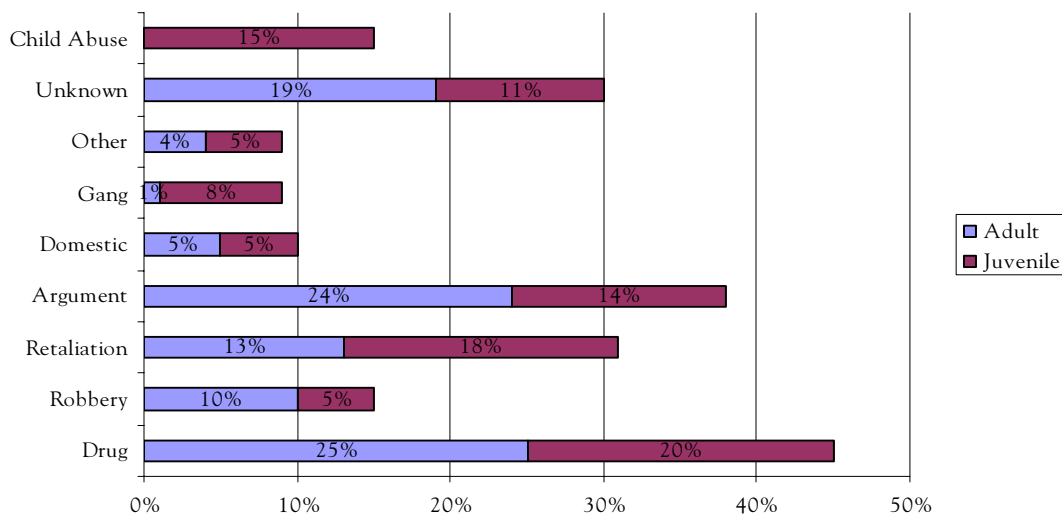
6.2 HOMICIDE MOTIVES FOR ADULT AND JUVENILE VICTIMS

Drug-related motives were high for both juveniles (20%) and adults (25%), although these age similarities do not extend to other motives. Unsurprisingly, retaliation and gang-related motives were more common for juvenile than adult homicides, while more adult than juvenile homicides involved an argument. Domestic and “other” motives were the same for both juveniles and adults. Fifteen percent of juvenile homicide victims died as a result of child abuse.

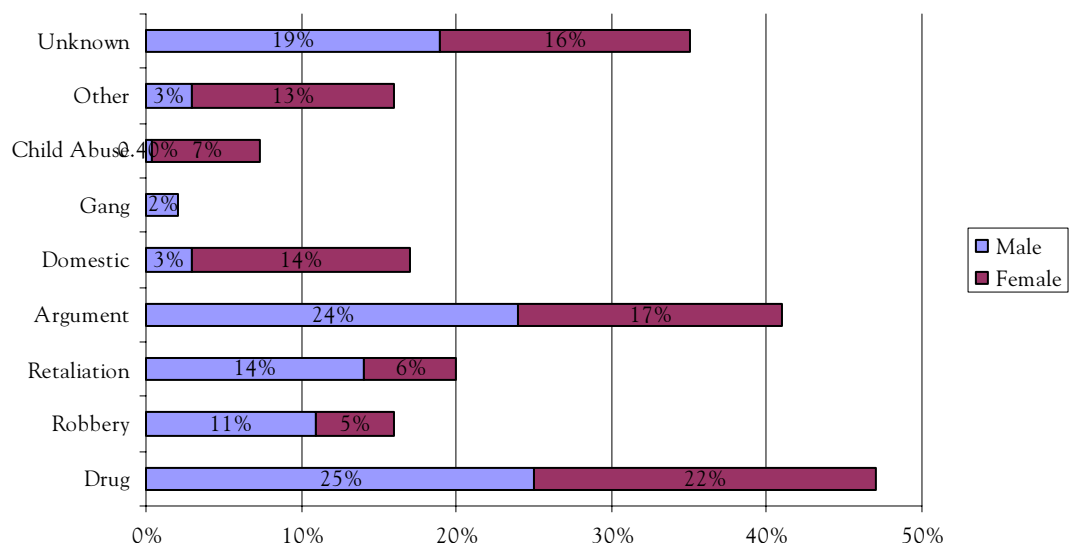
6.3 HOMICIDE MOTIVES – MALE AND FEMALE VICTIMS

With the exception of drug-related homicides, female victims were killed for different reasons than male victims. Females were more likely to be killed in situations involving domestic violence or child abuse. Homicides against males on the other hand, resulted from non-familial causes, such as robbery, retaliation, arguments and gang activity.

Homicide Motives - Adult and Juvenile Victims



Motive - Male and Female Victims

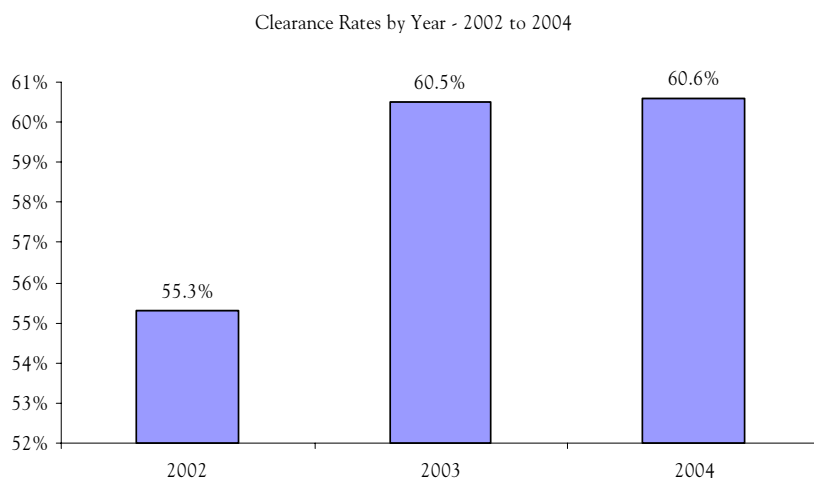


7. Clearance Rates

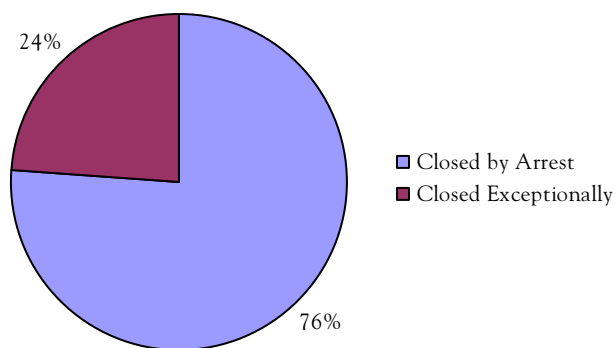
7.1 HOMICIDE CLEARANCE RATES, 2002-2004

This table shows a dramatic increase in MPD's homicide clearance rate between 2002 (55.3%) and 2004 (60.6%).

The higher clearance rate between 2002 and 2003 is attributable to a larger percentage of reported cases closed as well as a smaller number of reported cases. In 2002, MPD closed 145 current and prior-year cases. Even though the number of homicides dropped to 248 in 2003, MPD closed five additional cases (150) than in 2002.



7.2 HOMICIDE CLEARANCE RATES – CLOSURE TYPE, 2002-2004



Between 2002 and 2004, 76 percent of cases closed were closed by arrest and 24 percent were closed exceptionally.

MPD follows the FBI's Uniform Crime Report guidelines for exceptional closures. Homicides are cleared two ways - by arrest or exceptionally. An exceptional closure is defined as one in which the offender has been identified but cannot be charged due to one or more exigent circumstances—e.g., the suspect is killed or only confesses on his/her deathbed.

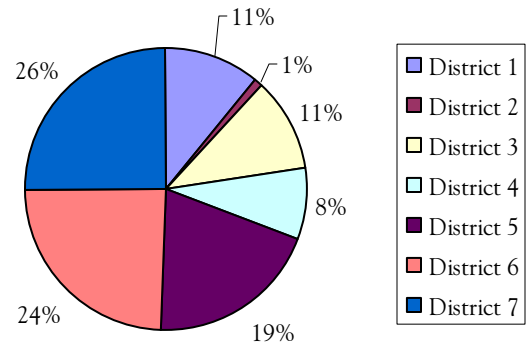
Note: Figures in this section exclude 2001 because data on prior-year closures are not available.

8. Location of Homicides

TABLE 8.1 LOCATION OF HOMICIDES BY POLICE DISTRICT

Homicides did not occur evenly across the city. They were concentrated in three police districts – district 5 (19%), district 6 (24%) and district 7 (26%) (the Northeast and Southeast quadrants of the city). At the opposite end of the scale were districts 1 (11%), 3 (11%), 4 (8%) and 2 (1%) (primarily the Northwest quadrant of the city)

Homicides by District



Homicides by Ward

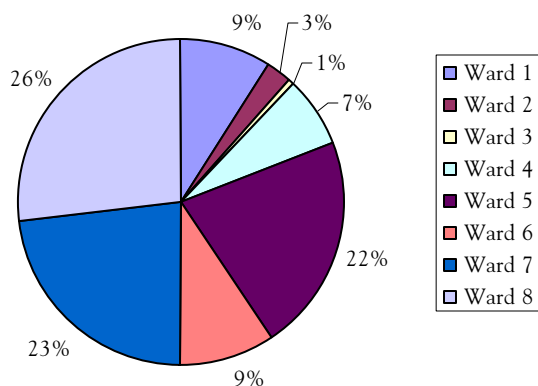


TABLE 8.2 LOCATION OF HOMICIDES BY WARD

Among the eight Wards in the District of Columbia, Wards 5, 7, and 8 (again, the Northeast and Southeast quadrants of the city) had by far the most homicides - a combined total of 71 percent. The smallest percentage of homicides occurred in Wards 2, 3 and 4 (the northwest quadrant of the city) – a combined total of than 11 percent. Wards 1 (Northwest) and 6 (all four quadrants) had the same percentage of homicides.

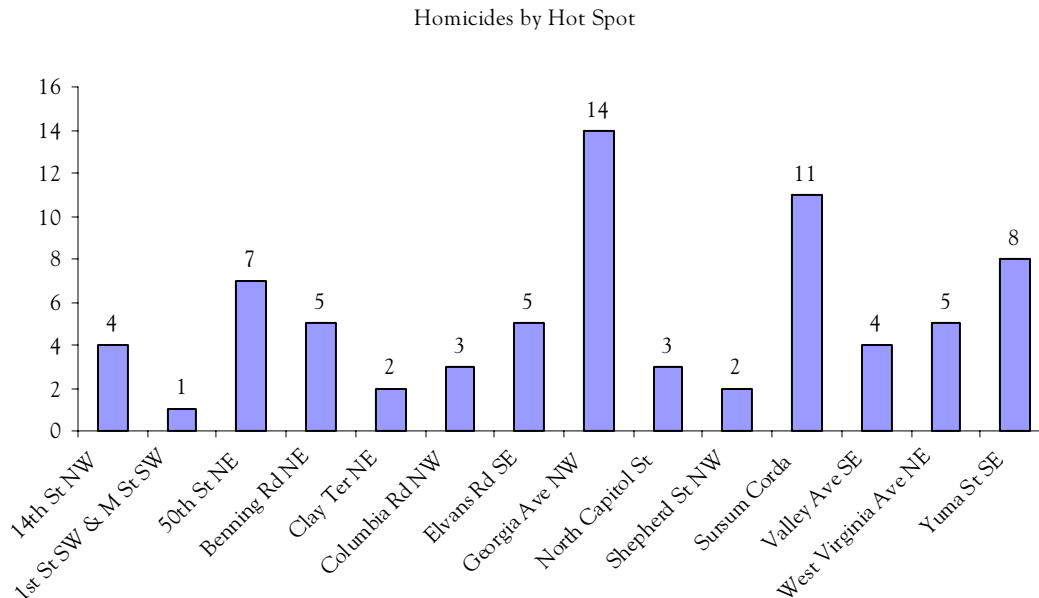


TABLE 8.3 LOCATION OF HOMICIDES BY HOT SPOT

A Hot Spot (or Violent Crime Focus Area) is an area identified through crime incident reports as having a high level of homicides and other violent crime, especially street crime. Although MPD did not identify Hot Spots until 2004, it is informative to look back and see if a problem in these areas was systemic.

Analysis of homicides occurring within one of the 14 Hot Spots showed varied results. Comparatively more homicides occurred in two of the Hot Spots - Georgia Avenue NW (14) and Sursum Corda (11). In contrast, the Hot Spot at 1st St SW & M St SW had only 1 homicide. It is important to note that Hot Spots are relatively small areas, which may account for the low numbers. Hot Spot activity should not be generalized citywide.

Number of Homicides	Neighborhood
10	Brightwood, Southwest/Waterfront and Stanton Park
11	Benning and Brentwood
12	Capitol View, Fort Dupont, Shipley and Truxton Circle
13	Lincoln Heights and NE Boundary,
14	Brightwood Park
15	Cardozo/Shaw and Hillside
16	Brookland, Edgewood, Kingman Park and Pleasant Plains
17	Deanwood and North Capitol Street
18	Barry Farm
19	Historic Anacostia and Near Northeast
20	Grant Park, Ivy City and Trinidad
21	Eckington
23	Carver and Fairlawn
25	Marshall Heights and Petworth
26	Benning Ridges
34	Columbia Heights
48	Congress Heights
51	Washington Highlands

TABLE 8.4 LOCATION OF HOMICIDES BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Certain neighborhoods experienced a larger number of homicides than others. The neighborhood of Washington Highlands had the greatest number of homicides between 2001 and 2004 – a total of 51. Other neighborhoods that experienced high numbers include Congress Heights (48 homicides) and Columbia Heights (34 homicides). This table includes only those neighborhoods showing more than 10 total homicides between 2001 and 2004.

Because neighborhood boundaries are subjective, figures should be interpreted with caution.

MPD Programs

The Metropolitan Police Department is committed to preventing crime and the fear of crime as we work with others to build safe and healthy neighborhoods throughout the District of Columbia. The Department's Policing for Prevention (PFP) strategy applies three approaches to crime and disorder, and guides MPD's strategy to reduce homicides as well. Used together, these approaches address homicides by focusing law enforcement efforts on immediate crime problems, building partnerships with community stakeholders to sustain success, and using the resources of government and other organizations to work on the underlying causes of crime in a community.

FOCUSED LAW ENFORCEMENT

Focused Law Enforcement (FLE) targets high-risk offenders and crime hot spots through the strategic use of police resources and partnerships with federal law enforcement, regulatory agencies, and criminal justice partners.

PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS

Project Safe Neighborhoods is a national campaign that strengthens partnerships among law enforcement agencies to suppress and deter gun violence. MPD is working with Federal law enforcement agencies and the courts to identify the gangs or crews that are most likely to commit violent crimes in D.C., target and apprehend members of the most violent groups, and use the example of their prosecution and incarceration to deter other groups from resorting to similar violence. The first phase of the Project took place in Sursum Corda, with a wave of arrests and a crackdown on violent offenders. The arrests and resulting prosecutions in Sursum Corda were used as an example to communicate to other groups that gun violence committed by any individual will be met with the strictest sanctions. The initial results are encouraging: violent crime in the Sursum Corda "Hot Spot" is down 40 percent in 2004 (compared with 2003).

HOMICIDE PREVENTION PROJECT

The Homicide Prevention Project (HPP), launched in 2003 in partnership with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), aims to remove violent criminals involved in drug trade from DC's communities. By increasing coordination between homicide and narcotics investigations, HPP is able to aggressively target and develop strong cases against specific individuals who are the linchpins in violent drug crime. The Homicide Prevention Project is closing homicides and other violent crimes, and obtaining cooperation in pursuit of other dangerous individuals.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS

Neighborhood partnerships bring together police, residents, city agencies, and other community stakeholders to tackle crime areas and disorderly conditions that attract crime and degrade quality of life in the District's communities.

HOT SPOT INITIATIVE

In February 2004, Mayor Anthony A. Williams launched an aggressive program to combat crime and rebuild some of the District of Columbia's most troubled neighborhoods. Called the "Hot Spot Initiative," the effort brings together the police, a range of other city government agencies, and the private and non-profit sectors for both a focused assault on crime and a more long-term effort to address the underlying conditions that can breed crime in geographically compact "hot spots." In each hot spot, MPD assigns additional patrols (vehicle, bicycle and foot), deploys specialized units (such as narcotics, gangs, prostitution and vehicle theft), conducts criminal investigations, and manages problem-solving efforts. At the same time, Neighborhood Services coordinates the efforts of other government agencies to clean up and revitalize the communities.

GANG INTERVENTION PARTNERSHIP

The Gang Intervention Partnership in the Columbia Heights/Shaw community has brought together MPD, community partners, neighborhood schools, and other District agencies to create a comprehensive network to engage youth, reduce gang-related violence, decrease gang membership, and prevent the proliferation of new gangs in the target area. Since the Partnership was created, there have been no gang-related Latino homicides in the city.

YOUTH INTERVENTION TEAM

Together with CSOSA, clergy, and grassroots organizations, the Youth Intervention Team works with youths involved with drugs and/or violence, providing referrals to counseling, job placement services and life skills training.

SYSTEMIC PREVENTION

Once neighborhood partnerships are in place, they can explore systemic prevention approaches that deal with the more chronic, entrenched issues that are at the root of problems in a community. The MPD focuses its efforts in this arena on engaging youth, providing alternatives for high-risk activities and behavior.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION TEAM

The Conflict Resolution Teams (CRT's) provide mediation and conflict resolution to groups of youths and young adults who historically settle their disputes through violence. The teams, comprised of police, clergy, service organizations, DC Public Schools, and citizens, are trained in mediation techniques, conflict resolution and partnership building. The CRTs conduct comprehensive assessments of at-risk youth, provide youth and family referrals, and follow up with youth and families involved in critical incidents.

CLERGY POLICE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The MPD works through Clergy Police Community Partnerships (CPCP) to develop sustainable structures for directing community resources to local youth. The valuable model first presented by the East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership (ERCPCP) has been replicated in other areas of the city through the Regional Operations Command (ROC) Central Clergy Police Community Partnership (RCCPCP) and the Faith-Based Community Action Partnership (FBCAP) with ROC North.

About This Report

DATA ACQUISITION AND ANALYSIS

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