

A REPORT ON

Juvenile Homicide

in the DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

2002–2004

In 2004, even as total homicides decreased 20% and overall violent crime almost 14% in the District of Columbia, juvenile homicides climbed sharply. Twenty-four youth (age 17 and younger) were killed in the District last year, compared to 13 in 2003 and 17 in 2002. These homicides included high-profile cases as well as ones that received little media attention, but they all involved a terrible loss of life and had a significant impact on families, friends, and communities. The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) has previously analyzed all homicides from 1998 through 2003 to help the Department and the city address the overall problem of lethal violence. So that MPD and its crime-reduction partners—families, neighborhoods, community and religious organizations, and government agencies—can better understand and respond to the violence that is killing too many youth in the city, the Department has conducted a summary analysis of juvenile homicides over the past three years (2002–2004).



Anthony A. Williams
Mayor



Charles H. Ramsey
Chief of Police

Statistics presented here are based on preliminary DC Index crime data queried on January 5, 2004—homicide information maintained by the Metropolitan Police Department's Violent Crimes Branch (VCB) and included in the original offense reports. The 2004 data do not represent official statistics submitted to the FBI under the Uniform Crime Reporting program (UCR). Numbers are subject to change based on new information about the victims and suspects. All statistics are based on the DC Code definition of a juvenile: "anyone age 17 or younger."

The Victims

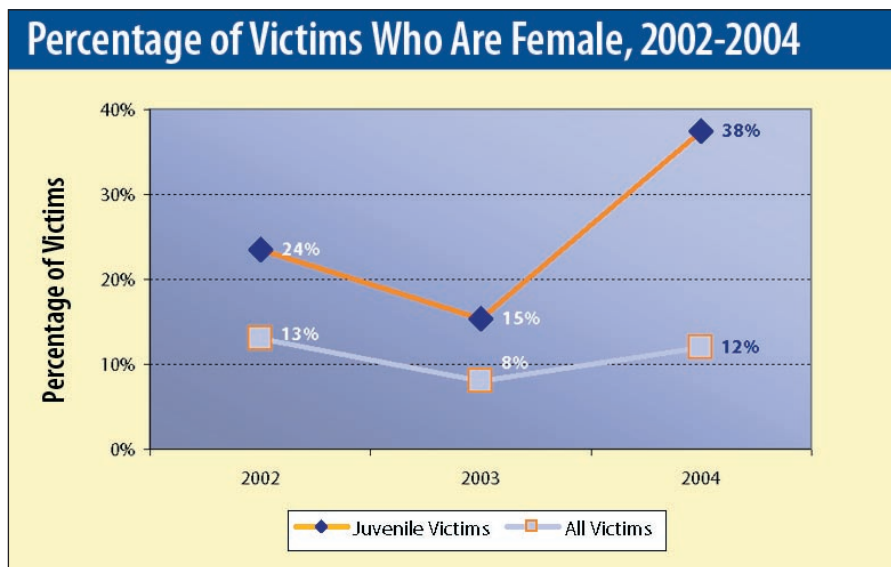
GENDER

One troubling trend is the increase in young female victims. Although far more males are murdered than females across the board, female victims represent a larger share of juvenile homicides than of all homicides. From 2002 through 2004, 28% of juvenile homicide victims were female. However, only 11% of all homicide victims—adult and juvenile—were female. This difference was even more striking in 2004, when 38% of the juvenile victims were female, as compared to 12% of all victims.

The number of female juveniles killed is growing much faster than other groups of homicide victims. Nine female juveniles were killed in 2004, more than four times the number killed in 2003 (two female juvenile homicides), and more than twice as many

killed in 2002 (four homicides). In contrast, male juvenile homicides ranged from 13 in 2002 to 11 in 2003, and 15 in 2004, for a total increase of only 15%. During the same time period, the number of adult homicide victims—both male and female—dropped.

Sadly, most of the increase (64%) in homicides in 2004 is attributable to young female victims. Of the nine females juveniles murdered in 2004, five died at the hands of a family member or other caregiver. Four of these girls had not yet celebrated their second birthdays when the incident that led to their death took place. Of the four females who were not victims of “family violence,” two were not believed to be the intended targets.

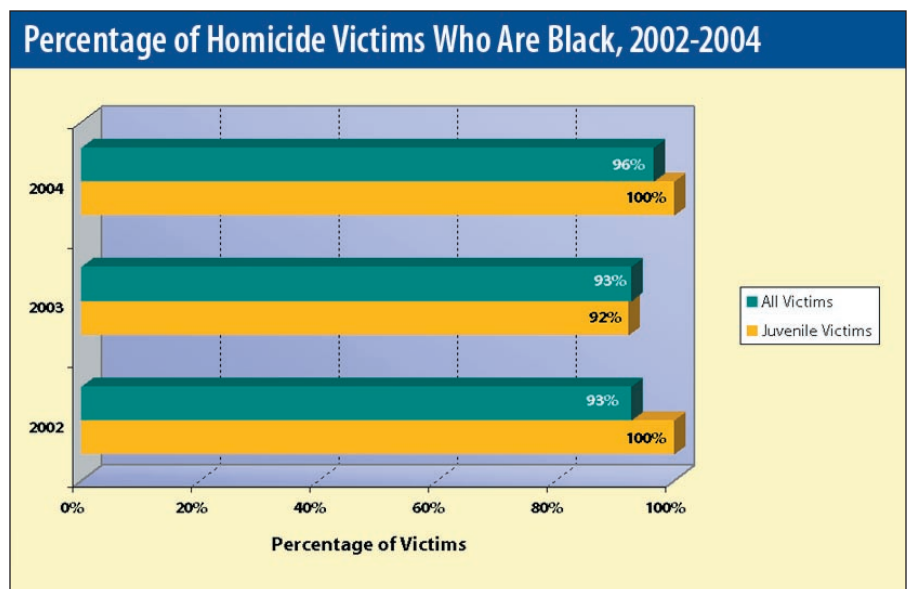


AGE

Juvenile homicide victims were younger in 2004 than in 2003 and 2002. In 2002 and 2003, less than a quarter (23%) of all juvenile homicide victims were under the age of 15. However, last year one out of every three juvenile homicide victims was age 14 or younger. Eight of the 24 victims in 2004 were younger than 15, as compared to two in 2003 and five in 2002. This is partly because of the increase in female victims, who are typically younger than their male victims. Of the eight juvenile victims under the age of 15, only one was male.

RACE

All 24 of the juvenile homicide victims in 2004 were black. In fact, of the 54 juvenile homicides in the past three years, only one victim—an Asian Indian male killed by his mother—was not black. This is similar to all homicides, in which more than nine out of ten victims in the city are black.



The Offenders

CLOSED CASES

Of the 24 juvenile homicides in 2004, 16 have been solved.¹ Fourteen were closed with an arrest in 2004, one exceptionally in 2004 and one exceptionally in January 2005. This includes closures in all five of the deaths involving family violence against infants or young children. In three of these cases, the suspect is the mother of the victim; in one case, an adult caregiver; in one case, a juvenile sibling. In the other 11 homicides from 2004 that have been closed, six of the suspects are adults, and five are juveniles.

In fact, in the past two years,² MPD has been able to close a greater percentage of juvenile homicide cases than of all homicides. In 2003, the Department closed 12 juvenile homicides for a clearance rate of 92.3%, as compared to a 60.5% clearance rate for all homicides. The 2004 clearance rate for juvenile homicides was 66.7% (16 cases closed); for all homicides, it was 60.6%.³

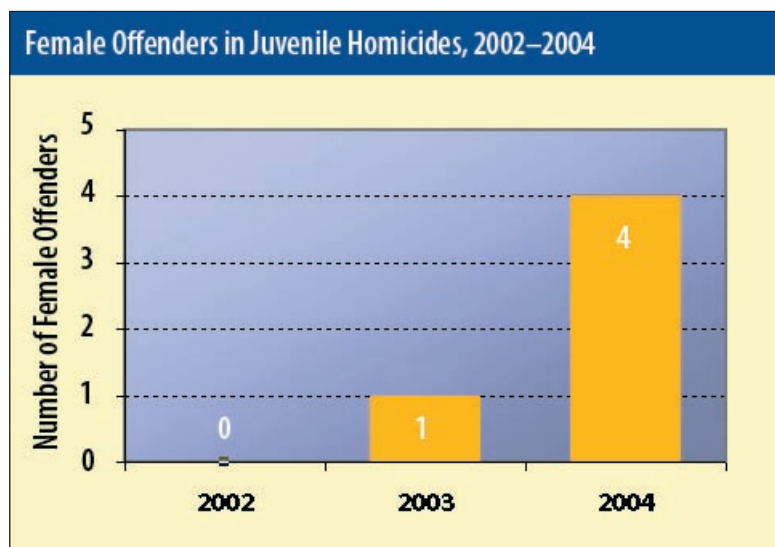
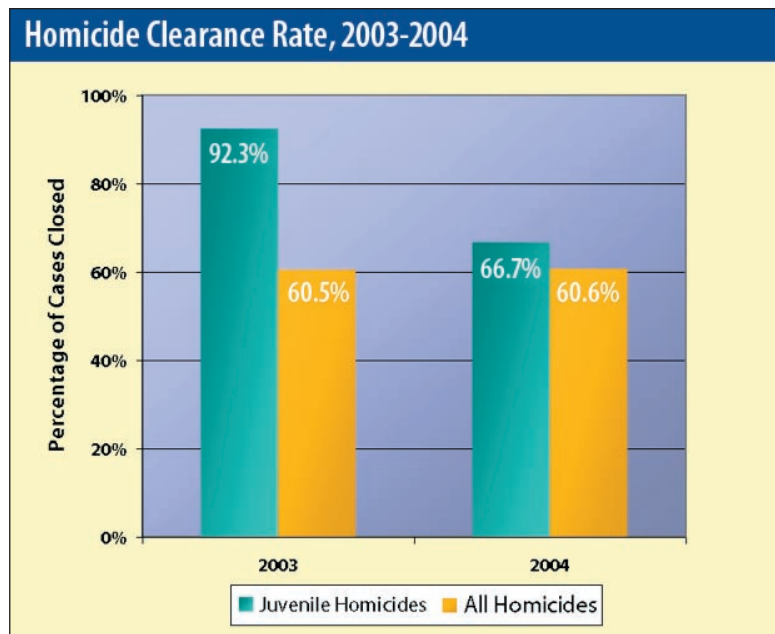
¹For the purposes of this report, only the first suspect arrested was counted for each closure. Subsequent arrests for the same offense are not reflected in this data.

²Closures from 2002 are omitted from this analysis because the date of birth data from some prior year cases was incomplete or inconsistent.

³In accordance with Federal Bureau of Investigation guidelines, clearance rates are defined as cases closed by arrest or exceptional means during a calendar year—regardless of what year the homicide took place—as a percentage of the homicides committed during that year. One of the 16 juvenile homicide cases closed in 2004 and four of those closed in 2003 were homicides from a previous year. The 2004 juvenile homicide closed in January 2005 will count towards the 2005 homicide clearance rate.

GENDER

As with juvenile homicide victims, an overwhelming majority of the offenders in juvenile homicide cases are male. However, there has been a rise in the percentage of female offenders in juvenile homicide cases. All five of the female offenders in the past three years have been the victim's mother or caregiver.

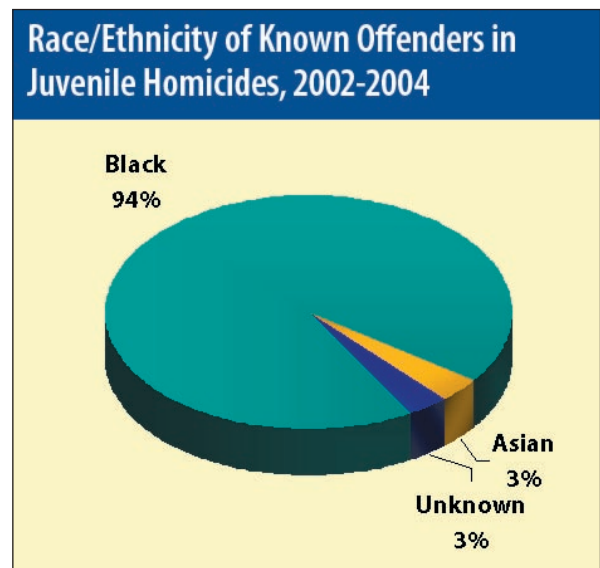
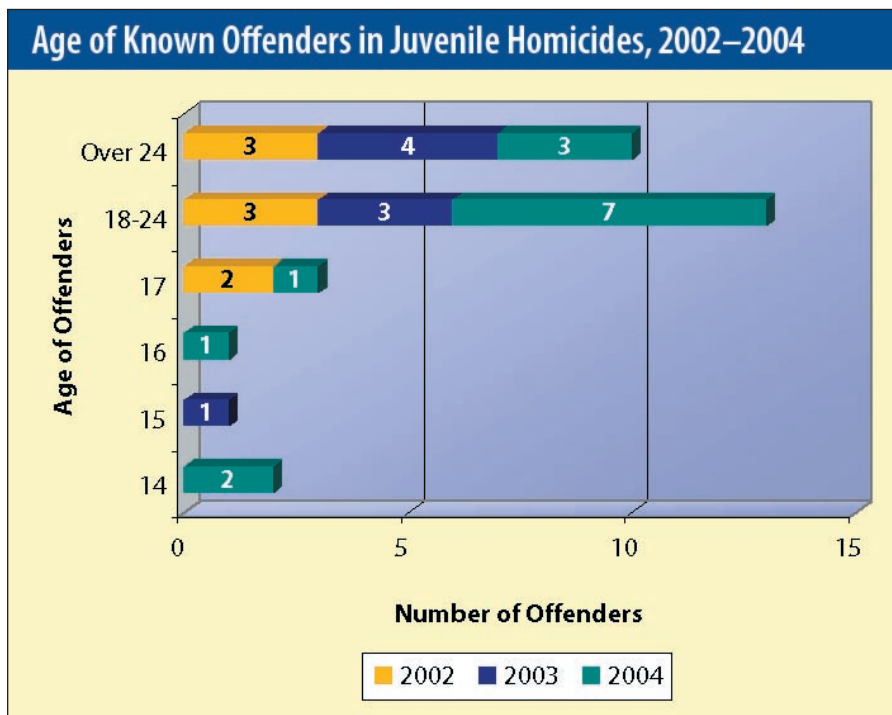


AGE

In juvenile homicide cases in the past three years, 23% of the 30 known offenders are themselves juveniles. While juveniles are still more likely to be murdered by adults, the problem of juvenile-on-juvenile violence is significant.

RACE

Of the 30 known offenders in juvenile homicide cases, 28 are black.



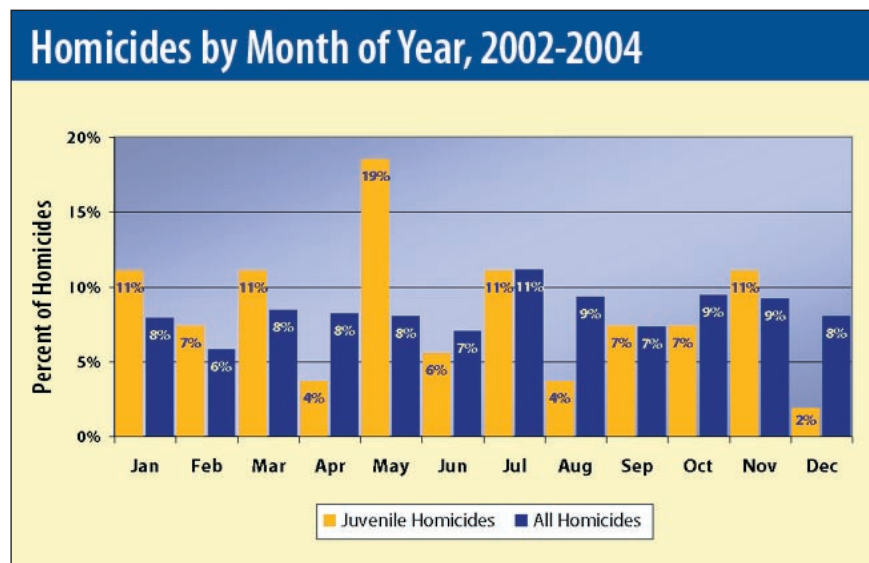
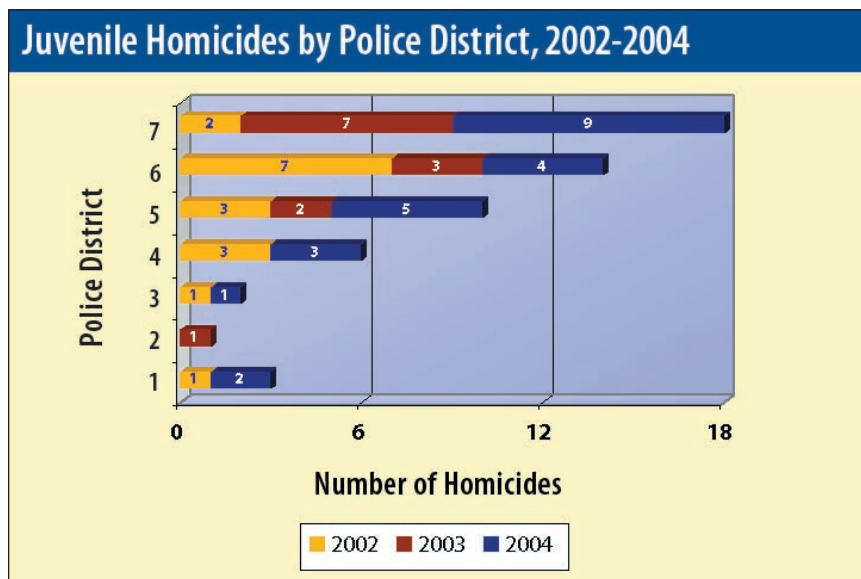
The Crime

LOCATION

Three out of every four juvenile homicides in 2004 occurred in the Fifth, Sixth, or Seventh District. The pattern for 2003 is similar, with 92% occurring in the same three police districts. Adult homicides during the past three years were also consistently highest in 5D, 6D, and 7D although the overall trend in these districts has been downward.

MONTH OF YEAR

While there is no clear trend as to the time of year that juvenile (or adult) homicides occur, most juvenile homicides do take place during the school year. From 2002 through 2004, only one of every seven juvenile homicides occurred in July or August. During the same time period, more juvenile homicides were committed in May (19%) than in any other month, in sharp contrast to the pattern of overall homicides.

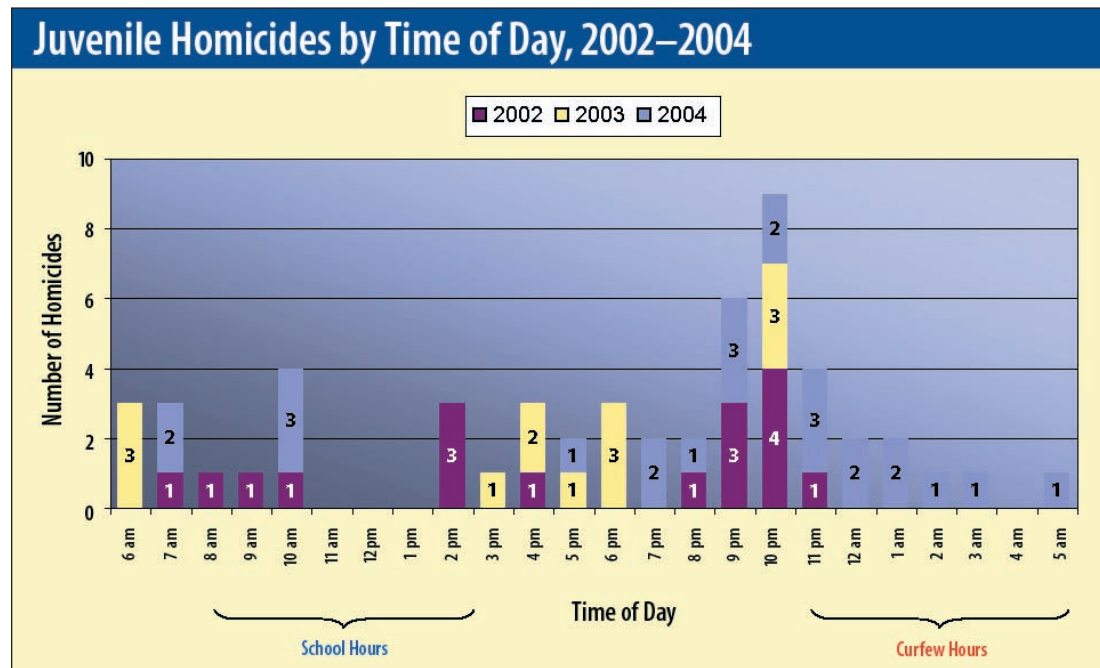


TIME OF DAY

Though juvenile homicides occur at almost all hours of the day, 39% of them occur between 9 PM and midnight. Eight (15%) of the juveniles were killed during the city's curfew hours.⁴ Of these eight, all were 15 to 17 year old males, and six were in apparent violation of the curfew law.⁵

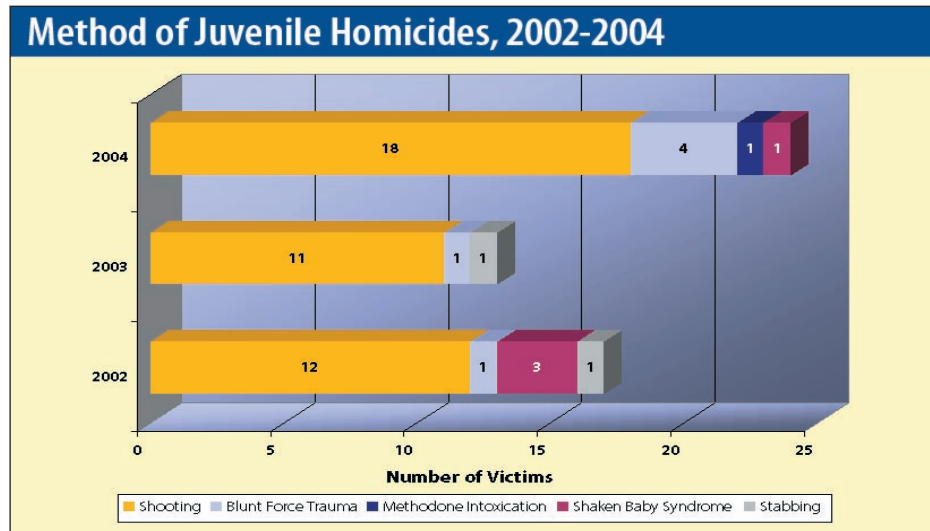
METHOD

As with adult homicides in DC, the vast majority of juveniles die as a result of gunshot wounds. Excluding the five young victims killed by a family member or caregiver in 2004, all but one of the 19 other juvenile victims were shot to death.



⁴From September through June, curfew begins at 11:00 pm Sunday through Thursday nights, and continues until 6:00 am the following day; curfew runs from 12:01 am–6:00 am on Saturday and Sunday. During the months of July and August, curfew hours are 12:01 am–6:00 am, seven days a week.

⁵Under the Juvenile Curfew Act of 1995 (DC Code 6-2181), 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 curfew hours, regardless of whether they live inside or outside the city.



About This Report

DATA ACQUISITION & ANALYSIS

Metropolitan Police Department
Office of Organizational Development/
Intergovernmental Relations Division
300 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 5140
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 727-2900

For additional information or additional copies of this report, contact:

Office of Public Information
(202) 727-4383

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Metropolitan Police Department
Office of Corporate Communications

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