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# HOMICIDE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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## Cover

The cover alphabetically lists  
all victims of homicide in the  
District from January 1985  
through June 1988.



U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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# LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

Each human life is a precious one. We must protect the precious lives of those we love, and protect the precious lives of our communities. While we recognize the seriousness of the homicide problem in the District, let us not become tolerant of this violence and senseless killing, or hopeless in our efforts to change this situation.

Marion Barry Jr.  
Mayor

**T**his report provides information and insight about one of the most devastating crimes and social problems, homicide. The social implications of this crime are immense as both the causes and effects tend to threaten the stability of families, communities and population groups.

While homicide is the most intense and harmful expression of violence, it is also a symptom of the despair and bleak outlook for the future that so many of our citizens feel. Based on information contained in the report, this general disillusionment affects both victims and assailants, many of whom are involved in illegal drug use or sales. Commission of a homicide is often the ultimate expression of violence by someone whose life has been characterized by abuse, crime, poverty, poor self-esteem and lack of identification with a sense of family and kinship. The victims often also fit this same description. These dire social circumstances are compounded by the virtual ease with which guns, the weapons used most frequently, may be obtained and brought into our city.

The District of Columbia has one of the most stringent gun control laws in the nation; yet, the lack of compatible legislation in neighboring states interferes with our ability to keep handguns out of the possession of persons who pose a risk to public safety. While this report's examination of patterns of homicides indicates that most deaths result from shootings, I must remind you that these numbers do not capture the even greater number of critical injuries caused by firearms which adds to the serious need to control firearm sales and distribution.

However, enforcement is not the only answer. Violence is an insidious disease that has permeated our society. To combat it, we must do more to change the attitudes and behavior of all citizens, particularly our youth. We must, by example and through teaching, demonstrate that honesty and compassion for one's fellow man are the true markings of maturity. We must instill in our youth a sense of pride and commitment to the work ethic. Most of all, we must give them a sense of hope that a world of equal opportunity for present and future success is available to them.

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

**H**omicide in the District of Columbia is a descriptive analysis of this tragic crime over the past three and one half years. This devastating crime is examined from the perspective of the victim, assailant, locations and patterns of the offenses. This study was undertaken as a result of the increased number of homicides over the past few years and as a natural outgrowth of the office's landmark report entitled, *Drug Abuse and Crime in the District of Columbia* that was published in 1987. Our research in compiling the study on drug abuse foretold a continual rise in homicides if significant abatement of illegal drug activity did not occur.

Unfortunately, the situation with which we are confronted today is a growing trend, particularly on the part of young black males, to adopt violence as a symbol of strength and a vehicle for acquiring financial gains through illegal drug sales. Currently, nearly 60 percent of homicides are thought to be drug-related.

Since homicide is a very personal tragedy that involves many factors and affects many victims, we have provided information in addition to statistical analyses. The report discusses salient issues such as homicide among blacks and homicide prevention, and offers a case study that depicts the predominant social patterns associated with this crime.

Just as there are multiple victims of homicide, there are multiple causes of violence and homicide, thus increasing the need for well-coordinated, comprehensive approaches to dealing with this tragic social phenomenon. The District of Columbia's Commission of Public Health recently undertook a major initiative to mobilize the community, in cooperation with other public agencies, to develop strategies aimed at preventing violence. Other public agencies have initiated programs that address this problem, such as the development of curricula in public schools that incorporate values emphasizing self-respect and respecting other people and their property. Also, several initiatives are underway aimed at teaching parents how to be more effective at child rearing.

In addition to these violence prevention programs, millions of dollars have gone into special law enforcement and corrections programs to apprehend and incarcerate persons who commit violent acts. One noteworthy outcome of this broad-based approach for addressing the problems associated with violence is that intergovernmental coordination and communication have been greatly improved, strengthening our ability to develop long-term solutions to the myriad causes of homicide.

We expect this report to evoke a variety of emotional reactions from you as it did with us during its preparation: sadness, fear, anger, and sheer outrage at the vulnerability we all feel for ourselves, our families and future generations. If we are to reverse the shocking trends revealed in this report, we must translate those emotions into positive actions aimed at preventing the use of violence as a method for resolving conflict.

Shirley A. Wilson  
Director, OCJPA

# INTRO- DUCTION

**O**n Tuesday, August 30, 1988, a local newspaper reported three telling accounts of homicide and violence in the District of Columbia. These incidents of homicide and violence involved very different circumstances and very different victims.

A 31-year-old man was arrested for the murder of a mentally ill street-woman in July. His victim, a 45-year-old woman who was homeless for more than 10 years and a resident at an emergency shelter in Northwest Washington, was known for singing songs and reading passages from the Bible to passersby. She was found raped, with multiple stab wounds and her own umbrella forced down her throat.

A 25-year-old man, known to police as the leader of a drug gang in a Northeast Washington neighborhood, was arrested for murder for the second time in one month. He was apparently involved in an ongoing and intense feud between rival drug groups, of which his two victims were allegedly members. His first victim was a 20-year-old man who was shot several times and the other was a 28-year-old man who was shot five times in the back. As they lay dying, both victims identified the man as their assailant.

A 14-year-old youth living in Southeast Washington confronted the drug dealers who had moved into his neighborhood over the past year and turned it into a drug market. He told them to move on and stop selling drugs there. This eighth-grader was warned by the drug dealers, but continued to confront them. His opposition was met with reprisal. According to witnesses, this youth got into an altercation with some of the drug dealers and was shot by one of them. He was not killed, but a clear message about his interference with the flow of drug business was sent.

These situations are indeed different. Together, however, they help to paint a picture of how homicides occur in the District: how anyone can find him—or herself, for a variety of reasons or no reason at all, in a situation that results in homicide.

*Homicide in the District of Columbia* examines this critical problem in this city to provide insight through compilation of statistical information and review of a range of homicide-related issues.

Most homicides are unplanned acts; however, if examined collectively, they present regular trends and patterns. This study presents a comprehensive

review of homicide in the District of Columbia by analyzing both victims and assailants as distinct groups, in relation to one another, and in relation to the incident.

The population for this study includes all homicide victims and persons arrested for homicide in the District from January 1985 through June 1988. Information presented about these groups includes age, gender, race, residence, urinalysis or toxicology test results, and location of the body or crime.

Additionally, this report presents epidemiological (regarding the cause of death that affects large numbers of people in a locality) information about homicides in the District. Included here are the time of day, week and year; the area of the city and type of location where homicides occurred; the weapons, methods and motives involved in the crime; and local, national and international homicide rates.

This study also addresses several important issues related to homicide, including drug-related killings and homicide prevention. Since the District's homicide victims and assailants are predominantly black, and homicide in the District is predominantly an intra-racial crime, this study focuses particular attention on the issue of homicide among blacks.

# TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**H**omicide can be considered in two contexts: as a criminal act and as a cause of death. While homicide has traditionally been considered a criminal justice issue, this report also looks at the problem from a public health perspective and addresses homicide as an issue of crime and victimization.

Homicide is defined as the reckless or intentional taking of human life by another individual and falls into two categories: criminal and non-criminal. Criminal homicide refers to first and second degree murder, voluntary (non-negligent) and involuntary (negligent) manslaughter. Non-criminal homicide is considered excusable, as in killing in self-defense, and justified, as in homicide performed as a legal duty by a police officer or executioner.

Homicide is considered first degree murder when the assailant killed with specific intent and malice, and after premeditation and deliberation, or while committing or attempting to commit another felony crime. Second degree murder occurs when the assailant killed without specific intent or with specific intent, but without premeditation or deliberation. Voluntary and involuntary manslaughter refer to killing without malice, but involuntary manslaughter is further classified by the absence of specific intent to kill, or specific intent to inflict the injury that caused death.

The District records, investigates and processes vehicular homicide separately from the types of homicides outlined above. Vehicular homicide is referred to as negligent homicide. Technically, the only factor that distinguishes a negligent homicide from manslaughter is that a vehicle is involved. In some cases, a traffic death is not considered a homicide at all if there is no evidence of intent, gross negligence, or wanton and willful disregard of the law. In such a case, the death is considered as a traffic fatality. Negligent homicides are handled by the Traffic Division of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and neither recorded nor investigated by the MPD's Homicide Branch.

# NATIONAL OVERVIEW



To put this report about homicide in the District into perspective, this section provides an overview of homicide in the United States. Currently, homicide nationally comprises 1 percent of violent crime and less than 1 percent of all crime. While homicides in the United States decreased by 3 percent from 1986 to 1987, homicides increased by 4 percent from 1983 to the present.

## 1987 national data about victims of homicide reveal that:

- 74 percent were males
- 49 percent were ages 20 to 34
- 53 percent were white
- 45 percent were black

## Data about assailants show that:

- 34 percent were ages 18 to 24
- 46 percent were white
- 52 percent were black

## Data about homicide patterns nationally reveal that:

- 59 percent of homicides resulted from shootings
- 20 percent resulted from stabbings
- 17 percent of victims were related to their assailants
- 40 percent of victims were acquainted with their assailants

This report on homicide reveals that, while the District has some homicide-related problems that may be particular to this city, many of the contributing factors and characteristics of the victims, assailants and patterns reflect the homicide problem in the nation.

## International Homicide Rates

Homicide comprises less than 1 percent of all crimes committed in the United States; yet, it stirs enormous interest and concern. Homicide is the most violent of crimes and is, perhaps, indicative of a society's willingness to be

violent, to disregard the value of human life, and to abandon rationale in resolving conflict. Data from selected countries show that this country has one of the highest homicide rates. What does this indicate about American society?

International Homicide Rates  
(per 100,000 population)  
CY 1980-1984

Country*	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
United States	10.2	9.8	9.0	8.2	7.9
Tanzania	5.9	6.2	8.0	8.4	7.8
Canada	6.4	6.7	6.9	6.3	6.3
Chile	6.2	7.1	6.4	5.5	6.6
Denmark	4.5	5.0	5.8	5.0	5.8
Sweden	4.7	4.9	5.1	5.4	5.8
Kenya	6.1	5.5	5.0	4.6	4.5
West Germany	4.4	4.8	4.9	4.5	4.5
France	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.6
Turkey	5.8	4.3	2.9	1.6	1.4
India	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.8
Israel	2.1	2.1	1.8	1.8	1.8
Egypt	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.4	1.5
Nigeria	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6
Libya	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5
Japan	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Korea	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.2	1.4
England/Wales	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.2

\* Ranked by 1980 to 1984 average rate

Source: Correlates of Crime Data Set (Bennett, 1988).

Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans & Analysis.



**M**atters relating to the victim are generally regarded more as a public health issue than a criminal justice issue. When homicide is discussed from a criminal justice perspective, the focus is primarily on investigating the criminal act and apprehending the assailant. A public health view examines homicide as a disease and seeks to uncover factors that will help to understand and prevent this premature and unnatural cause of death that affects such large numbers of people in our community. Victim information was gathered from the District's Metropolitan Police Department and Commission of Public Health.

The majority of victims in the District were young, black males.▼

# THE VICTIM



## AGE

Most homicide victims who died between January 1985 and June 1988 were ages 18 to 32. Thirty (30) percent of the victims were ages 18 to 25 and an additional 24 percent were ages 26 to 32. The most frequent age reported was 25 years old. Only 7.3 percent of the cases were ages 1 to 17, while 18 percent were ages 33 to 39, 10 percent were ages 40 to 47, and another 10 percent were over 47 years old. This age pattern is consistent across each year of the study (Table 1, Figure 1).

## RACE AND GENDER

Most homicide victims were black males. Nearly 90 percent of all victims were black, while 5 percent were white and 5 percent were of other races. Most of the victims, 84 percent, were male. A breakdown by race and gender indicates that approximately 75 percent of the cases were black males, 14 percent were black females, 4 percent were white males and 1 percent were white females. Each year in the study shows a similar pattern for both race and gender (Table 2, Figure 2).

Table 1  
Age of Victims  
CY 1985 — June 1988

Age	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1-12	4	3	6	3	7	3	7	5	24	4
13-17	4	3	4	2	12	5	6	4	26	4
18-25	35	24	54	29	65	30	55	39	209	30
26-32	38	26	39	21	57	26	32	22	166	24
33-39	28	19	40	22	36	16	22	15	126	18
40-47	19	13	21	11	19	9	10	7	69	10
47+	16	11	20	11	24	11	11	8	71	10
<b>Total*</b>	<b>144</b>		<b>184</b>		<b>220</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>691</b>	
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>30.5</b>		<b>31</b>		<b>28</b>		<b>26</b>		<b>29</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice  
Plans and Analysis.

Table 2  
Race and Gender of Victims  
CY 1985 — June 1988

Race/Gender	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Black Male	107	74	136	74	171	75	121	78	535	75
Black Female	23	16	28	15	32	14	19	12	102	14
White Male	7	5	9	5	13	6	3	2	32	5
White Female	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	7	1
Other Male	5	3	8	4	9	4	8	5	30	4
Other Female	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	6	1
<b>Total*</b>	<b>145</b>		<b>184</b>		<b>228</b>		<b>155</b>		<b>712</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice  
Plans and Analysis.

Figure 1  
Median Ages of Victims/Assailants

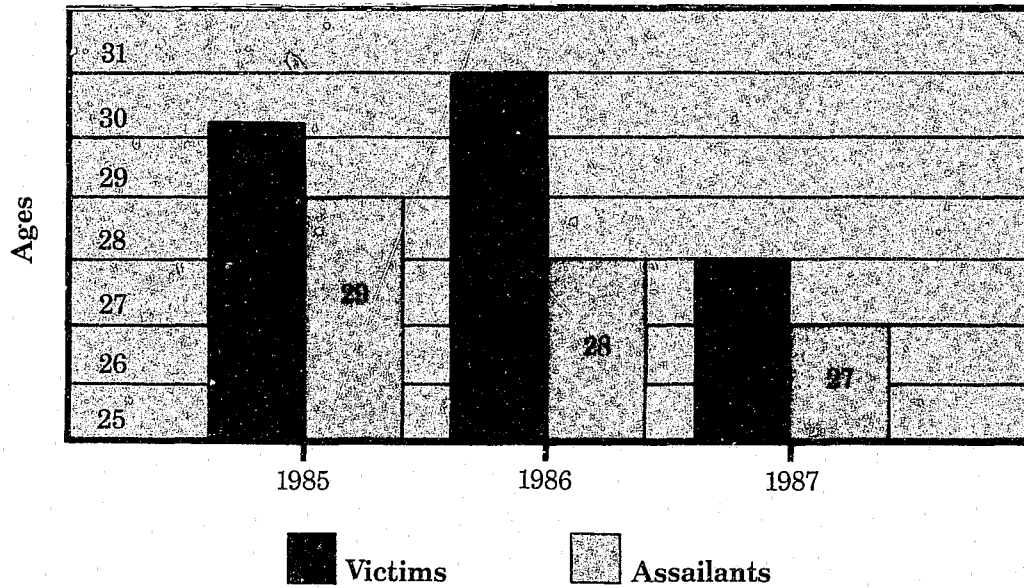
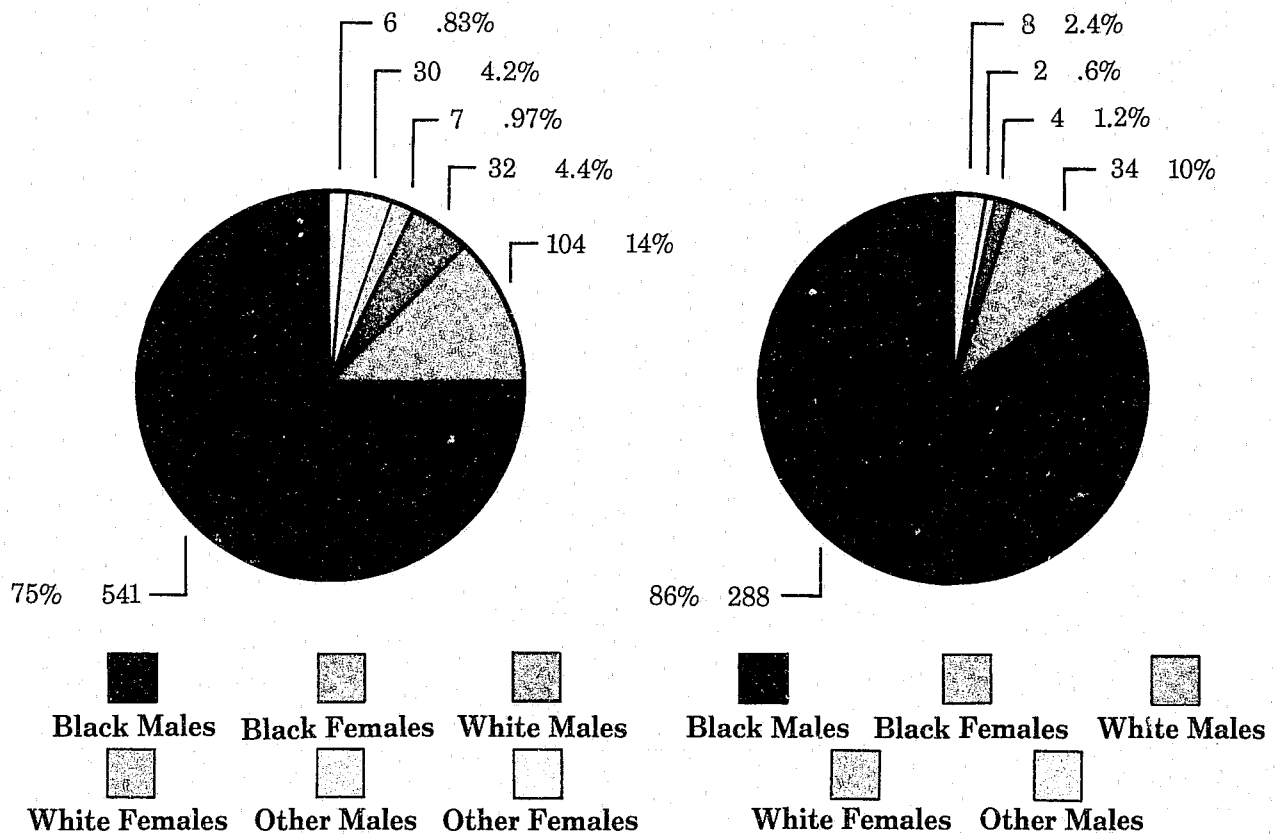


Figure 2  
Race and Gender of Victims      Race and Gender of Assailants



## RESIDENCE

A yearly analysis of victims' residence reveals no consistent homicide pattern. However, collapsing all years together shows that most victims lived in Ward 8 (20 percent), Ward 5 (16 percent) and Wards 6 and 7 (15 percent each), and very few victims lived in Ward 3 (1 percent) and Ward 4 (8 percent) (Table 3).

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Toxicology data indicate that about 63 percent of the victims had some type of drug or alcohol in their systems while only 32 percent did not. The most common substances found in victims were PCP, cocaine, and alcohol. Yearly drug analyses indicate that victims increasingly used both PCP and cocaine, while alcohol use decreased over the

study period. In 1985, 15 percent of the victims had PCP in their systems, 17 percent had cocaine and 37 percent had alcohol. In 1988, however, 22 percent of the victims were found to have PCP, 45 percent had cocaine, and 23 percent had alcohol. Only a small portion of the cases were found to have heroin, marijuana, or other drugs, such as methadone and amphetamines, in their systems (Table 4, Figure 3).

Table 3  
Residence of Victims  
CY 1985 — June 1988

Ward	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	17	14	23	17	16	10	18	16	74	14
2	9	8	19	14	18	11	14	13	60	11
3	0	0	1	1	3	2	0	0	4	1
4	11	9	8	6	16	10	7	6	42	8
5	21	18	19	14	25	15	19	17	84	16
6	18	15	22	16	20	12	19	17	79	15
7	23	19	19	14	25	15	15	14	82	15
8	19	16	27	20	44	26	18	16	108	20
Total*	118		138		167		110		533	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

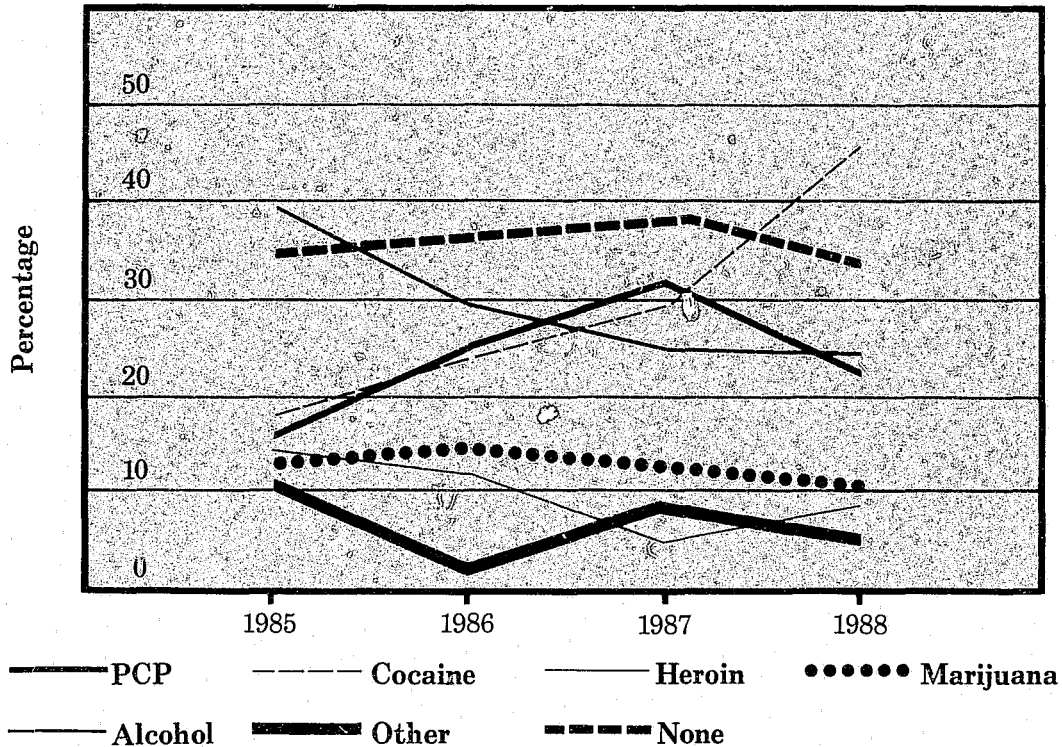
Table 4  
Toxicology of Victims  
CY 1985 — June 1988

Substance*	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
PCP	23	15	55	27	73	30	26	22	177	24
Cocaine	26	17	54	26	70	29	54	45	204	28
Heroin	21	14	25	12	8	3	8	7	62	9
Marijuana	19	12	29	14	30	12	12	10	90	12
Alcohol	59	38	60	29	57	24	27	23	203	28
Other	17	11	2	1	12	5	4	3	35	5
None	56	35	78	37	93	38	39	32	266	37
Number of Cases Tested**	156		207		242		119		724	

\*Categories not mutually exclusive.  
\*\*Totals include justifiable and vehicular homicides.

Source: Commission of Public Health.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Figure 3  
 Toxicology of Victims  
 CY 1985—June 1988



### Other Victims

If homicide were measured in terms of the suffering it causes, the number of homicide victims would increase to include the victims' survivors. It is estimated that each homicide victim is survived by at least three significant others for whom the death will have traumatic impact. This means that in 1987, there were 60,000 or more victims of homicide in the United States. Homicide has especially intense effects on the victim's family members and close friends, but also has emotional impact on neighbors, schoolmates, colleagues and the overall community.

Those who survive the death of a loved one face a variety of stress factors. There are immediate demands of identifying the body, funeral arrangements,

and contacting relatives. Often, the death necessitates role changes for survivors. There is financial stress if the victim was the primary source of income. Death by homicide involves additional stress factors that are not experienced by survivors of victims of natural death. Homicide survivors become involved in the criminal justice system. They turn to this system for not only practical purposes, but also the emotional support that they hope will come from the system's processing of the case.

Survivors first feel relief when the assailant is apprehended. This relief, however, is often transformed to stress when survivors learn that many arrests do not result in prosecutions. And even if assailants are convicted, the sentences

are not always harsh and often not served in full. Additionally, trial dates are often postponed or delayed for months and even years. Survivors may never feel that justice was served if the case is never solved, or if the assailant is acquitted or given a light sentence.

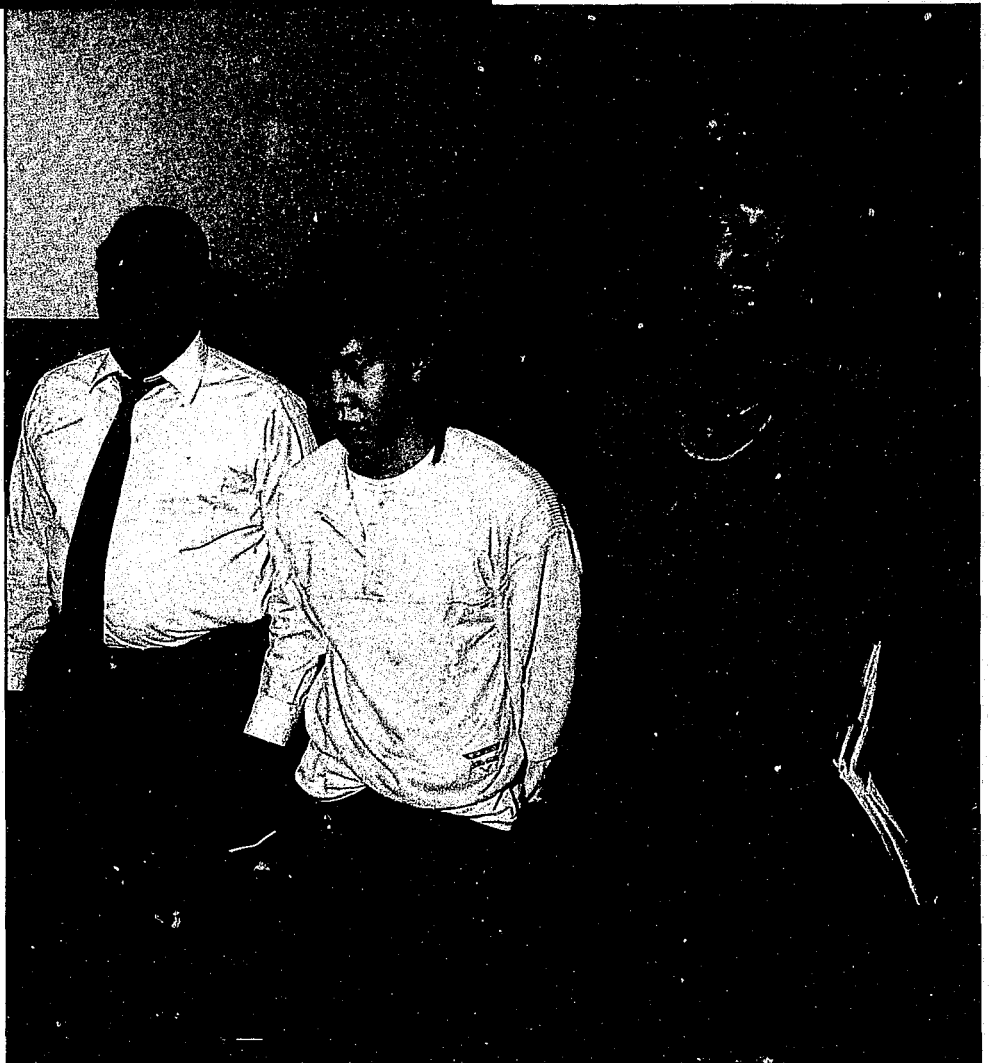
While the criminal justice system exists to apprehend, prosecute, convict and punish criminals with objectivity, survivors also often feel helpless and resentful when their many and intense emotions are met with seemingly dispassionate procedures, classifications, and judgments.

Source: Excerpted from National Organization of Victim Assistance Network Information Bulletin, October 1985

# THE ASSAILANT

This defendant was arrested in October for the murder of a man in a nightclub in July, 1988.▼

**T**his section seeks to present a profile of the homicide assailant. Information about the assailant, however, refers to individuals arrested for homicide in the District, and not necessarily people who have been convicted for committing homicide. Additionally, the number of people arrested for homicide will vary from the number of homicides since people arrested in a given year may have committed the murder in a previous year and a given assailant may be responsible for more than one homicide. There were 103 persons arrested for homicide in 1985, 102 in 1986, 131 in 1987, and 73 in the first six months of 1988. Assailant information was gathered from the Metropolitan Police Department and the District's Pretrial Services Agency.



## AGE

The profile of the alleged homicide assailant is similar to that of the homicide victim. Most assailants were ages 18 to 32 with 34 percent being ages 18 to 25 and 31 percent being ages 26 to 32. Thirty (30) percent of the assailants were older than 32, while 8 percent were under the age of 18. This age pattern for adults (18 and older) is consistent across each year in the study. The number of juvenile (under age 18) assailants has increased over the years from 11 in 1985 to 10 in only the first six months of 1988 (Table 5, Figure 1).

## RACE AND GENDER

An overwhelming majority of the assailants were black males. Close to 96 percent of the assailants were black, 2 percent were white, and 2 percent were from other races. The data also show that 89 percent of the assailants were male. A breakdown by race and gender indicates that approximately 86 percent were black males, while 10 percent were black females. Only 1 percent were white males while less than 1 percent were white females (Table 6, Figure 2).

Table 5  
Age of Assailants  
CY 1985 — 1987

Age	1985		1986		1987		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 18	11	10	8	7	10	7	29	8
18-25	34	30	36	33	54	38	124	34
26-32	27	24	36	33	39	28	102	28
33-39	21	18	12	11	16	11	49	13
40-47	8	7	9	8	11	8	28	8
48+	13	11	9	8	11	8	33	9
<b>Total*</b>	<b>114</b>		<b>110</b>		<b>141</b>		<b>365</b>	
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>29</b>		<b>28</b>		<b>27</b>		<b>28</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Table 6  
Race and Gender of Assailants  
CY 1985 — 1987

Race/Gender	1985		1986		1987		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Black Male	88	85	83	81	117	89	288	86
Black Female	14	14	11	11	9	7	34	10
White Male	1	1	2	2	1	1	4	1
White Female	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1
Other Male	0	0	5	5	3	2	8	2
Other Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total*</b>	<b>103</b>		<b>102</b>		<b>131</b>		<b>336</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

## RESIDENCE

The distribution of assailant residence is very similar to that of the victims. The greatest number of assailants lived in Ward 8 (19.4 percent). Many other assailants, however, lived in Ward 6, (17 percent), Ward 5 (16 percent), Ward 7 (15 percent) and Ward 1 (13 percent). Less than 1 percent of the assailants lived in Ward 3 (Table 7).

## DRUG USE

Persons arrested in the District are routinely tested for drug use. Urinalysis test results indicate that cocaine is the most common drug used by persons arrested for homicide. The data show that 26 percent of the arrestees tested positive for cocaine, 11 percent for PCP, and 7 percent for opiates such as heroin. Yearly analysis of this data shows that PCP use declined among those arrested for homicide while cocaine use slightly increased. For example, 27 percent of those arrested for homicide during 1985 tested positive for PCP while only 18 percent tested positive in 1987. In 1985, 24 percent of the same group tested positive for cocaine while 30 percent did in 1987 (Table 8). It should be noted that these results reflect drug use only among those who were tested; approximately 53 percent of homicide arrestees were not tested.

Table 7  
Residence of Assailants  
CY 1985 — 1987

Ward	1985		1986		1987		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	15	16	9	12	12	11	36	13
2	12	13	12	16	6	6	30	11
3	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1
4	7	8	9	12	8	7	24	9
5	14	15	7	9	22	20	43	16
6	14	15	11	14	21	19	46	17
7	13	14	10	13	18	17	41	15
8	16	18	17	22	20	19	53	19
Total*	91		76		108		275	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Table 8  
Assailant Drug Test Results  
CY 1985 — 1987

Drug*	1985		1986		1987		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
PCP	18	27	12	23	11	18	41	23
Cocaine	16	24	12	23	18	30	46	26
Methadone	1	2	1	2	1	2	3	2
Opiates	8	12	6	11	7	12	21	12
Amphetamines	5	8	1	2	6	10	12	7
No Drugs	36	55	28	53	33	55	97	54
Number of Cases Tested**	66		53		60		179	

\*Categories not mutually exclusive.  
\*\*Totals exclude cases for which urinalysis testing was not done.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.



## **The Case of a Murderer**

John is a 34-year old, handsome and articulate black man who grew up in Northwest Washington. He is the last of four children, raised by a single mother who worked all hours as a domestic and at odd jobs to support her family. John has already spent more than 10 years in prison and is currently serving a life sentence and other consecutive terms at the Lorton Correctional Complex for a range of felony crimes, one of which is first degree murder.

John's situation is a common one and illustrates the profile of a homicide assailant. When he committed the murder, he was young, poor, unemployed, undereducated, and involved in drugs and crime. He grew up in a bad neighborhood and got involved with drugs at age 10 and crime at age 12. He started with marijuana, moved on to harder drugs and eventually graduated to selling drugs. John has a long history of involvement in the criminal justice

system. He was placed in several youth homes and served a sentence in a federal prison prior to his current commitment. John says it was his mother's absence from the home and a lack of supervision and guidance that led him at an early age to a life of drugs and crime.

John liked having money and turned to crime because it not only yielded a lot of money quickly, but also was a source of excitement. Supporting a drug habit, maintaining the lifestyle of a "big spender" and living in the "fast lane" led John from being a street dealer to being a distributor for a drug wholesaler. As is often the case, the relationship between John and his drug dealers turned bad. John thought he was being cut out of the action without being paid for his work. His dealers thought John was cheating them. They were in conflict for a period of time, started threatening one another and eventually had an altercation that resulted in a murder.

John thinks he did what he had to do. He says that people involved in the drug world have different rules than everyone else. They know the consequences of certain actions. John carried a gun because he accepted the fact that he might have to use it to protect himself or his goods, and he accepted the fact that others with whom he worked did the same thing. He and his victim were in a conflict that John thinks would have had only one outcome. John says he did first what he knew his victim was going to do to him. He calls it self-defense.

What kind of a man is John? He says he isn't vicious, he is a businessman and that there are crimes much worse than what he did. He thinks that killing an elderly person or a woman or a child is wrong, but that the man he killed deserved to be killed for violating their agreement, for disrespecting him and for taking what belonged to him. He is sorry that he killed someone, but doesn't see that he could have done things any other way.

# PATTERNS OF HOMICIDE

Homicides increased 27 percent from 148 victims in 1985 to 188 victims in 1986, and 22 percent from 188 victims in 1986 to 230 victims in 1987 (Table 9).

Unlike many other studies in metropolitan areas, no significant patterns emerged concerning the month in which the homicides took place. Data for 1985 show that the largest number of homicides were reported in April, June, October, and December. During 1986, most homicides occurred in January, May, June, and November. Homicides during 1987 were almost evenly distributed across the months at about 7 to 9 percent each month except for December, when the percentage of homicide increased to 13 percent (Table 10).

Time patterns begin to emerge concerning the day on which most homicides occurred. A greater proportion of homicides took place on weekend days than on week days. Data for 1985 indicate that 64 percent of homicides occurred between Monday and Friday while 37 percent occurred on Saturday and Sunday. Results for 1986 and 1987 are somewhat different. The largest percentages of homicides in 1986 occurred on Friday and Monday, 17 and 16 percent respectively. Data for 1986 show a more even

**H**omicide is most often an unpredictable act; usually no one knows when a homicide will occur, who will be killed or who the killer will be. In an effort to understand the mystery of this crime, researchers have investigated a variety of factors, such as weather, moon phases, seasons, day of week, and time of day that possibly influence homicidal behavior. While these factors have been linked in some studies to psychoemotional states of mind, there are situational factors, such as availability of firearms, drugs and interpersonal violence, that also influence homicidal behavior. This section provides information on patterns of time, method, motive, location, and victim-assailant relationship that have emerged from analysis of data on the victim, the assailant and the homicidal incident.

## TIME

Studies indicate that certain time patterns exist concerning the incidence of crime. Findings show certain fluctuations in crime rates when time factors such as year, month, day, and time are considered. Data in this study support some of these notions.

Data for the District show that the incidence of homicide has increased over the past several years. There was a 55 percent increase in homicides from 148 victims in 1985 to 230 victims in 1987.

Table 9  
Homicide and Violent Crime Rates  
in the District of Columbia  
CY 1978 — 1987

Year*	Homicide Total**	Homicide Rate	Violent Crime Total	Violent Crime Rate
1978	189	28	9515	1407
1979	180	27	10553	1609
1980	200	31	12772	2011
1981	223	35	14468	2275
1982	194	31	13397	2123
1983	186	30	11936	1915
1984	175	28	10725	1722
1985	148	24	10172	1625
1986	194	31	9422	1505
1987	225	36	10016	1610

\*Unless consisting of estimates for the total U.S. population, each year reflects the number of agencies reporting and the extent of the population coverage.

\*\*Totals exclude justifiable homicides.  
Source: Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation.  
Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

distribution of homicides across the days of the week than the previous year. Results for 1987 are similar to 1986. Despite the large percentage of homicides on Sunday and Tuesday, 19 percent and 17 percent respectively, homicides were proportionately distributed across the rest of the days of the week during 1987 (Table 11).

**Table 10**  
**Month of Homicide**  
**CY 1985 — June 1988**

Month	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
January	11	7	21	11	19	8	36	24	87	12
February	11	7	16	9	18	8	17	11	62	9
March	10	7	12	6	19	8	26	18	67	9
April	15	10	8	4	15	7	24	16	62	9
May	12	8	18	10	17	7	19	13	66	9
June	18	12	25	13	19	8	26	18	88	12
July	10	7	10	5	16	7	—	—	36	5
August	10	7	14	7	17	7	—	—	41	6
September	9	6	11	6	19	8	—	—	39	6
October	16	11	16	9	20	9	—	—	52	7
November	10	7	20	11	21	9	—	—	51	7
December	16	11	17	9	30	13	—	—	63	9
<b>Total*</b>	<b>148</b>		<b>188</b>		<b>230</b>		<b>148</b>		<b>714</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

**Table 11**  
**Day of Homicide**  
**CY 1985 — June 1988**

Day	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Monday	20	14	27	16	23	10	22	15	92	13
Tuesday	20	14	19	12	39	17	24	16	102	15
Wednesday	18	12	23	14	32	14	19	13	92	13
Thursday	18	12	19	12	24	11	17	12	78	11
Friday	18	12	28	17	32	14	19	13	97	14
Saturday	32	22	25	15	34	15	27	18	118	17
Sunday	22	15	24	15	44	19	20	14	110	16
<b>Total*</b>	<b>148</b>		<b>165</b>		<b>228</b>		<b>148</b>		<b>689</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

The most significant pattern to emerge involves the time of day of homicides. The majority of homicides for each year in the study occurred between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. A breakdown by year indicates that 46 percent of the cases in 1985 occurred during this interval, 38 percent during 1986, 51 percent in 1987

and 41 percent in the first six months of 1988. Thus, the data consistently show that the majority of homicides take place during these six hours (Table 12, Figure 4).

Analyzing these data with three-hour intervals reveals other patterns. The largest percentage of homicides occurred

between 9 p.m. and midnight in each year in the analysis: 27 percent in 1985, 19 percent in 1986, 32 percent in 1987, and 21 percent in the first six months of 1988. The second largest percentage of homicides was reported between midnight and 3 a.m.; 19 percent in 1985 through 1987 and 20 percent in the first six months of 1988. High percentages of homicides were also reported from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. (Table 12).

**Table 12**  
**Time of Homicide**  
**CY 1985 — June 1988**

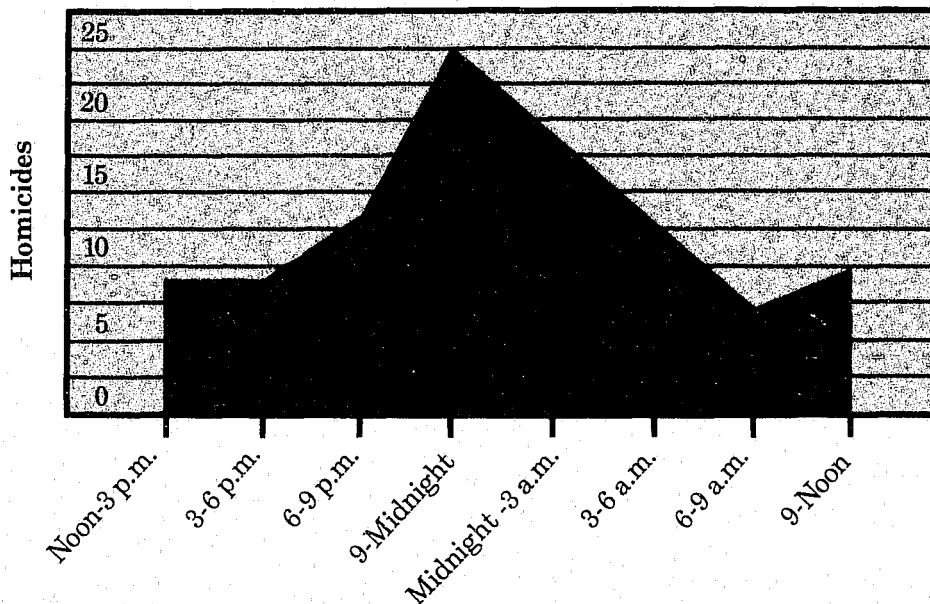
Time	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Midnight-2:59 am	24	19	33	19	38	19	29	20	124	19
3 am-5:59 am	13	10	27	15	16	8	27	18	83	13
6 am-8:59 am	3	2	13	7	12	6	16	11	44	7
9 am-11:59 am	16	13	18	10	14	7	14	10	62	10
Noon-2:59 am	11	9	18	10	10	5	13	9	52	8
3 pm-5:59 pm	12	9	20	11	13	7	8	5	53	8
6 pm-8:59 pm	14	11	13	7	32	16	13	9	72	11
9 pm-11:59 pm	35	27	33	19	64	32	29	20	161	25
<b>Total*</b>	<b>128</b>		<b>175</b>		<b>199</b>		<b>149</b>		<b>651</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

**Figure 4**  
**Time of Homicide**  
**CY 1985 — June 1988**



## LOCATION

Considering that most victims are related to or acquainted with their assailant, it is not surprising that data show that the majority of victims lived in the same neighborhoods as their assailants and were killed in their own neighborhoods. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of victims were killed at their own homes.

Analysis of ward location of homicides with victim residence reveals that an average of 70 percent of victims were killed in their own neighborhoods while only a small percentage were killed in wards other than those in which they lived. In fact, given knowledge of the homicide location, one can predict the victim's residence with 50 percent accuracy. Most victims were killed in Ward 8 (20 percent) and Ward 1 (18 percent). Additionally, 15 percent of homicides took place in each of Wards 2 and 6, while 14 percent took place in Ward 7 and 12 percent in Ward 5. The smallest number of homicides were in Ward 4 (5 percent) and Ward 3 (1 percent). These patterns were consistent throughout the years in the study (Table 13, Map 1). Additionally, approximately 60 percent of assailants lived in the same wards as their victims.

Map 1  
Homicides By Census Tract  
1985—June 1988

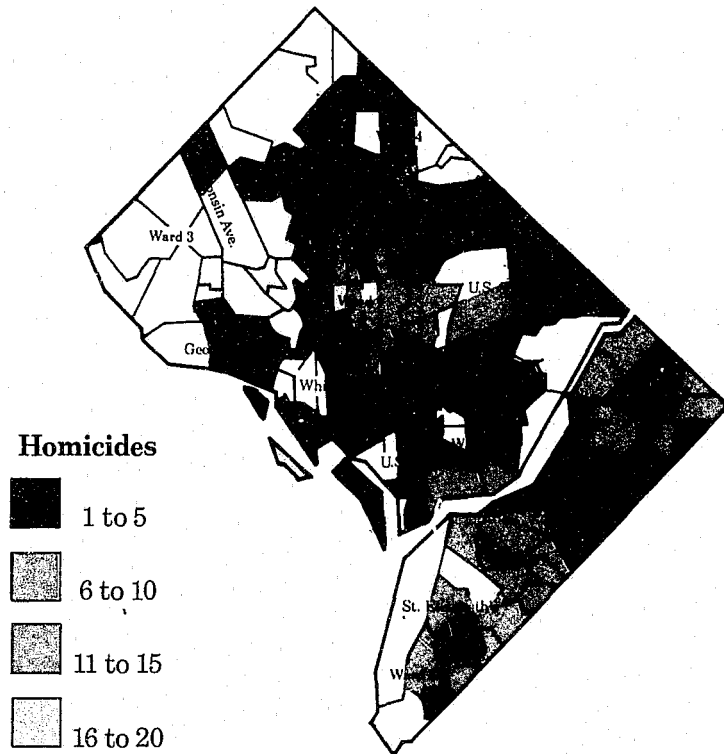


Table 13  
Ward Location of Homicide  
CY 1985—June 1988

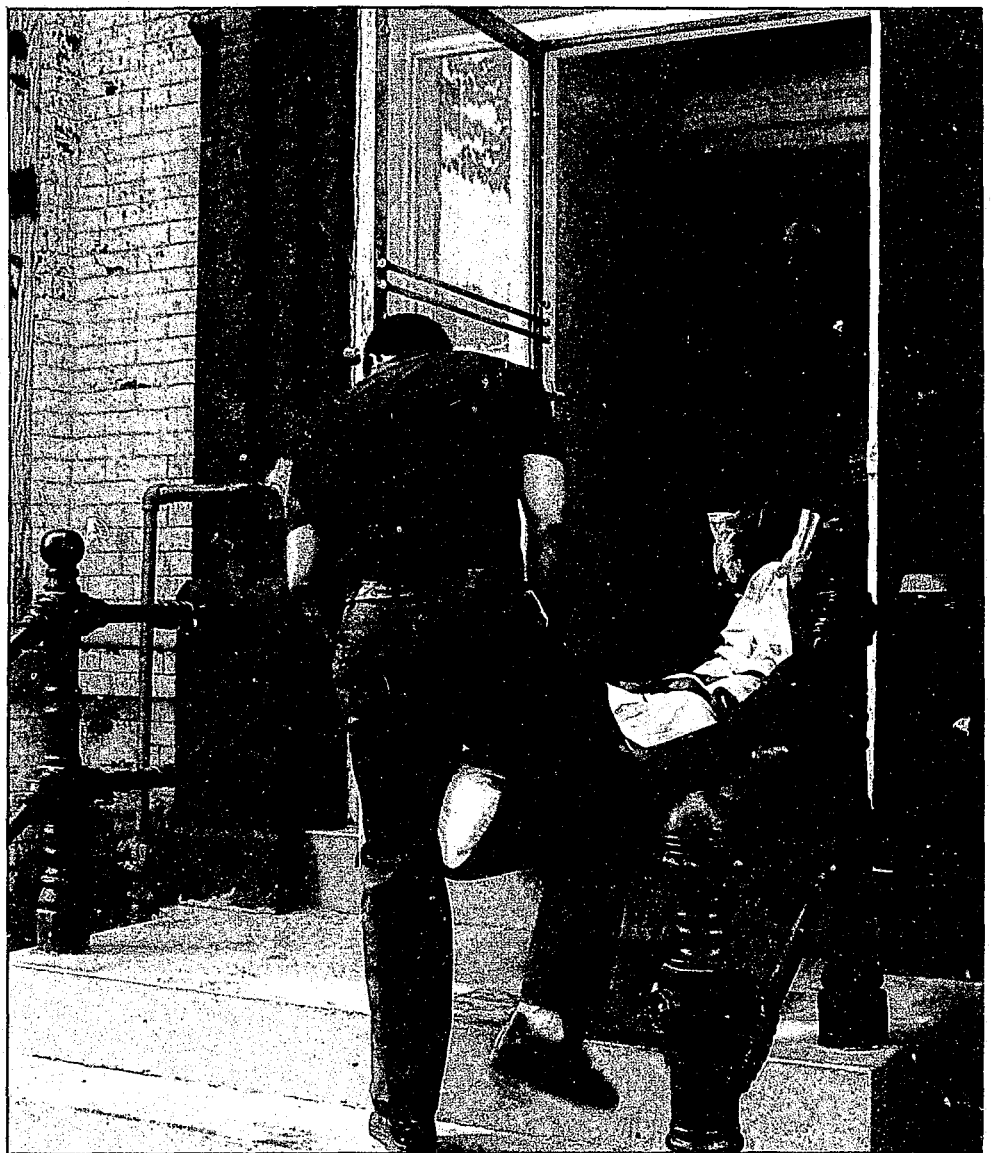
Ward	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	27	21	39	22	28	13	27	18	121	18
2	19	15	24	13	30	14	29	19	102	15
3	0	0	3	2	3	1	0	0	6	1
4	9	7	3	2	15	7	5	3	32	5
5	17	13	17	10	30	14	20	13	84	12
6	19	15	26	15	30	14	25	16	100	15
7	17	13	28	16	26	12	23	15	94	14
8	23	18	38	21	49	23	24	16	134	20
<b>Total*</b>	<b>131</b>		<b>178</b>		<b>211</b>		<b>153</b>		<b>673</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice  
Plans and Analysis.

As much as 74 percent of the victims were killed at their own residences in 1985, 55 percent in 1986, 72 percent in 1987, and 64 percent in the first half of 1988. The majority of these killings occurred outside the residence rather than inside. In 1985, 52 percent of the victims were killed outside their own residences while 22 percent were killed inside. This gap narrows over the years in the study. In 1988, 30 percent of the victims were killed outside their own residence while 34 percent were found inside. Of victims killed away from their own residences, about 14 percent were killed in areas considered public space (Table 14).



The majority of victims in the District were killed at their own residences. ▶

Table 14  
Site Location of Homicide  
CY 1985 — June 1988

Site	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Outside Residence	77	52	34	18	100	43	34	30	245	36
Inside Residence	32	22	73	38	66	29	38	34	209	30
Public Space	17	11	45	23	24	10	16	14	102	15
Hallway/Stairwell	1	1	4	2	6	3	0	0	11	2
Business	9	6	10	5	16	7	5	4	40	6
Automobile	9	6	8	4	0	0	7	6	24	4
Other	6	4	20	10	19	8	13	12	58	8
<b>Total*</b>	<b>151</b>		<b>194</b>		<b>231</b>		<b>113</b>		<b>689</b>	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

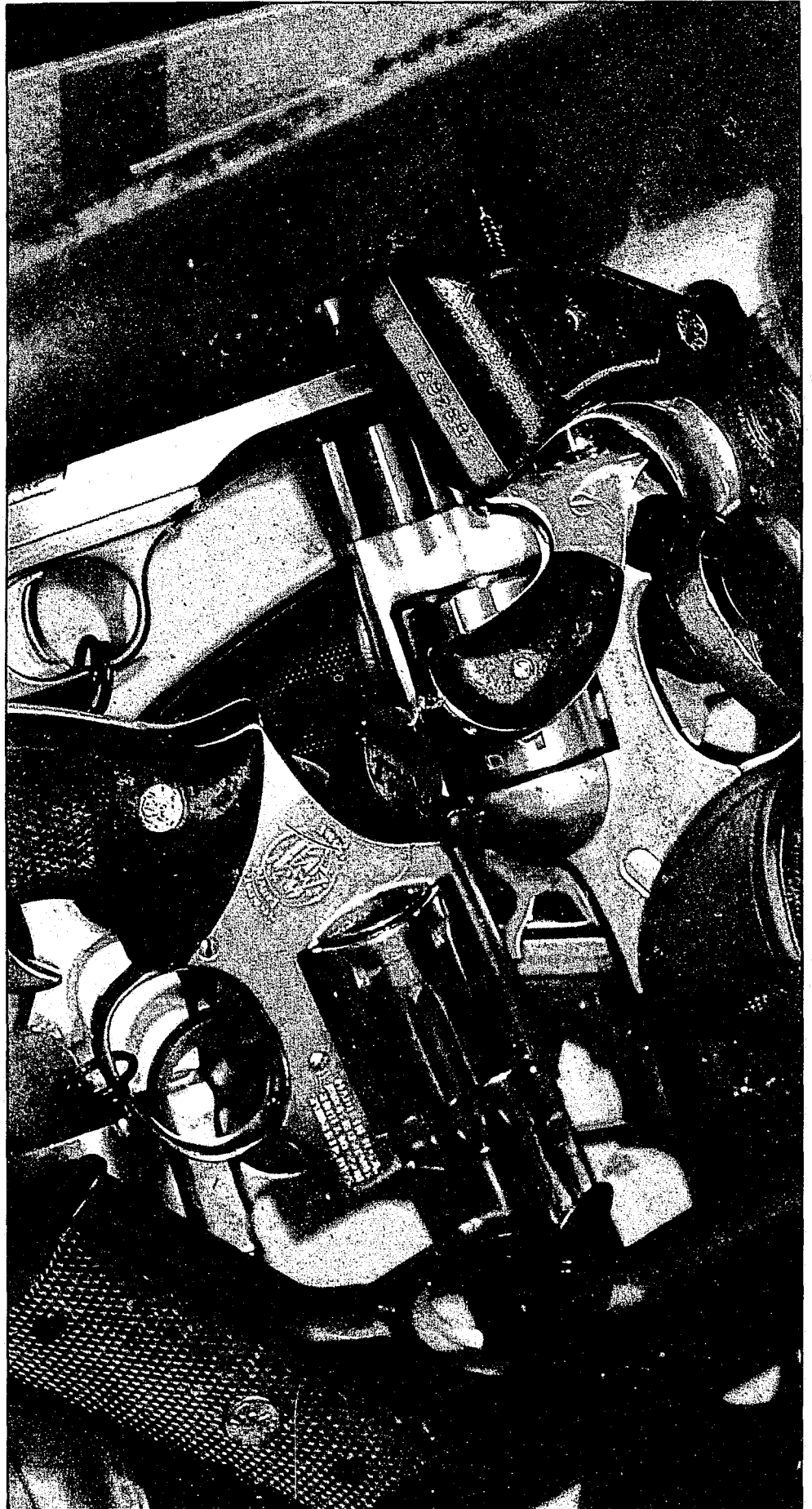
Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Commission of Public Health.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice  
Plans and Analysis.

## METHOD

The increases in homicide and violent assaults are in part attributable to the increase in the availability of firearms. Although there are ongoing efforts to pass more stringent gun control laws, only a few states have gun control limits and the market for illegal guns is lucrative. Unless registered before 1976, possession of handguns is illegal in the District. However, the lack of such legislation in surrounding jurisdictions makes it easy for anyone to obtain a weapon.

Guns are by far the weapon of choice in the District and nationally. Based on evidence confiscated by police, nine millimeter guns are the most common. While the .38 caliber revolver is still used, a popular practice in the streets is to load magazines with 15 and 32 round capacity into nine millimeter semi- and full-automatic guns. This can be done easily because anyone can buy magazines over-the-counter without a license.



An overwhelming majority of victims in the District were killed with firearms. All of these weapons were seized at a single location. ▶

**Table 15**  
**Method of Homicide**  
**CY 1985 — June 1988**

Method	1985		1986		1987		1988		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Shooting	91	65	105	58	137	62	105	70	438	63
Stabbing	36	26	44	24	52	23	33	22	165	24
Blunt Force Trauma	2	1	11	6	18	8	4	3	35	5
Strangulation	2	1	5	3	3	1	5	3	15	2
Beating	5	4	5	3	5	2	1	1	16	2
Burns/Arson	0	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	5	1
Other	2	1	6	3	1	1	0	0	9	1
Combination	2	1	1	1	6	3	2	1	11	2
<b>Total*</b>	<b>140</b>		<b>182</b>		<b>222</b>		<b>150</b>		<b>694</b>	

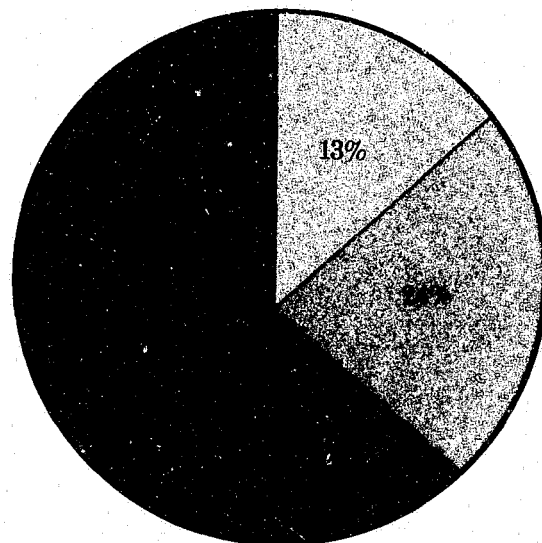
\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Totals include justifiable homicides.

Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Shootings were the most common method of homicide in each year of the study, followed by stabbings. An overwhelming majority of the victims were killed with firearms, most of which were handguns. During 1985, shootings accounted for 65 percent of the deaths while stabbings accounted for 26 percent. The percentage of deaths by shooting increased from 65 percent in 1985 to 70 percent in the first six months of 1988, while the percentage of deaths by stabbing slightly decreased from 26 percent in 1985 to 22 percent in the first half of 1988 (Table 15, Figure 5).

**Figure 5**  
**Method of Homicide**  
**CY 1985 — June 1988**



Shooting
  Stabbing
  Other



## MOTIVE

Motives for homicide are classified into several categories: drugs, altercation, domestic, robbery, sex, other, and unknown. The motive of drugs refers to homicides for which drug trafficking or use are a direct cause of the murder.

Altercation as a motive refers to arguments and conflicts between people who are not related while domestic motives include confrontations between relatives. Motives that fall into the "other" category include police shootings and accidental killings. The category for unknown includes cases for which no arrest has been made and those for which a suspect has been identified or arrested, but no additional information about the crime has been discovered or divulged.

It should be noted that police record only one motive per crime. Although many homicides involve circumstances that may fall into more than one motive category, the case is assessed and a primary motive is identified. Contributing factors, however, are also noted in the case reports.

Data collected on homicide motives show some significant changes over the years in the study. During 1985, 49 percent of the homicide motives were altercations while 21 percent were robbery and 21 percent were drugs. In 1986, the primary motives for homicide were drugs (34 percent) and altercations (28 percent).

It was during 1987 that a major shift in homicide motive took place. During this year, homicide resulting from drug motives escalated to 51 percent, replacing altercations (15 percent) as the most common motive for homicide. This same pattern was reported for the first six months of 1988 when 80 percent of the motives were drug-related, 7 percent were altercations and 7 percent were domestic (Table 16).

Evidence gathered by police indicates that this execution-style killing in June 1988 was drug-related. ▶

Table 16  
Homicide Motive  
CY 1985 — June 1988

Motive	1985		1986		1987		1988	
	#	%*	#	%*	#	%*	#	%*
Altercation	49	49	23	28	26	15	8	7
Drugs	21	21	28	34	90	51	95	80
Domestic	7	7	9	11	26	15	8	7
Robbery	21	21	5	6	19	11	6	5
Sex	1	1	1	1	9	5	2	2
Other	2	2	17	20	8	4	0	0
Subtotal	101		83		178		119	
Unknown	47		105		52		37	
Total**	148		188		230		156	

\*Percents for categories are based on cases for which motive is known.

\*\*Totals include justifiable homicides. Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice  
Plans and Analysis.



## ILLEGAL DRUG ACTIVITY

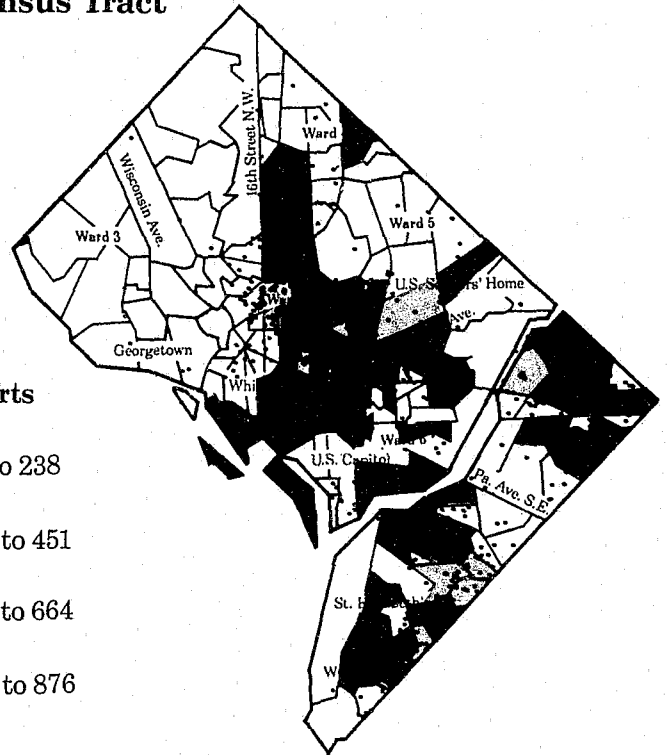
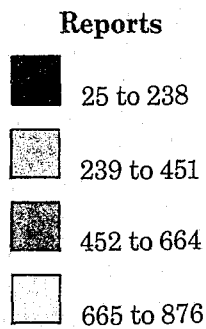
In 1987, citizens made more than 23,000 calls for service to police for incidents of illegal drug activity. These are incidents which individuals witness and report to police as suspected crimes. As portrayed in Map 2, homicides appear to be concentrated in those areas where illegal drug activity is highest. This suggests a strong relationship between illegal drug activity and homicide.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Social scientists suggest that there is a relationship between income levels and crime. Map 3, which depicts the average income of District households in 1987 and the residence of assailants, shows that assailants are concentrated in those neighborhoods that report the lowest incomes.

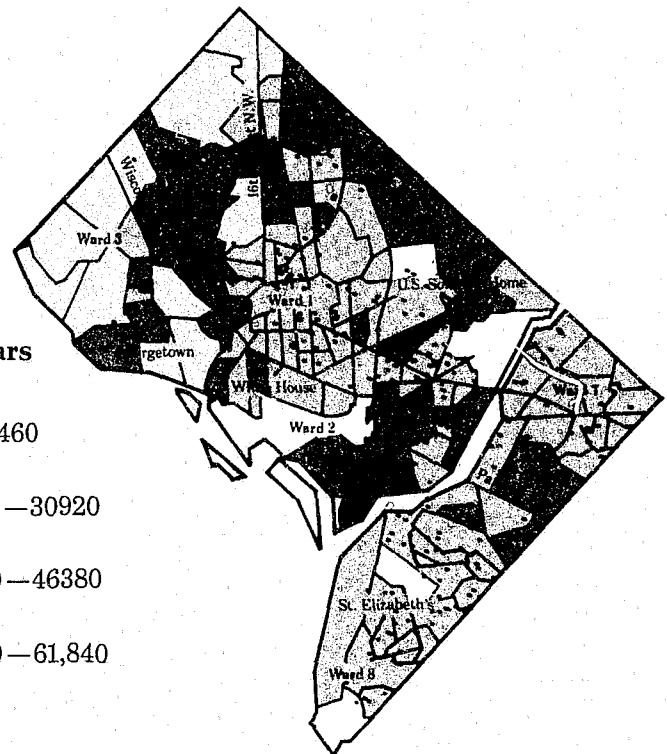
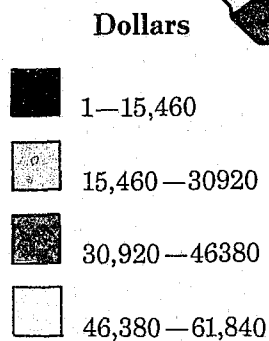
Map 2  
1987 Reports of Illegal Drug Activity  
By Census Tract

1 Dot = Homicide  
(1985—June 1988)



Map 3  
1987 Average Household Income  
By Census Tract

1 Dot = 1 Arrestee  
(1985—June 1988)



## VICTIM-ASSAILANT RELATIONSHIP

Most homicide victims know their assailants. While the victim-assailant relationship in the majority of cases in the study period remains unknown, of those reported, most victims were the relatives, friends or acquaintances of their assailants.

The victim and assailant are considered relatives if they have direct kinship ties and friends if they have no kinship ties, but know one another personally. Victims and assailants are considered acquaintances if they interacted, but did not necessarily know one another personally, as in the case of drug dealers and their clients. In the case where a victim and assailant are considered strangers, the police may suspect or know of a relationship, but have no evidence or witnesses to substantiate their speculation. The reasons for a victim-assailant relationship to be unknown are similar to those for unknown motives: the case may not be closed; or, if it is, the assailant may refuse to give any additional information about the crime.

Data for the District show that 6 percent of homicides occurred between relatives, 23 percent between friends or acquaintances, and 15 percent between

strangers. An additional 55 percent of the relationships were unknown. These patterns are consistent for all years in the study (Table 17).

Table 17  
Victim-Assailant Relationship  
CY 1985 - 1987

Assailant Relationship to Victim	1985		1986		1987		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Relative	5	16	0	0	1	3	6	6
Friend/ Acquaintance	9	28	7	23	6	19	22	23
Stranger	6	19	4	13	4	13	14	15
Unknown	12	38	20	65	20	65	52	55
Total*	32		31		31		94	

\*Totals exclude cases for which data is incomplete.  
Percent totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared By: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

## Drug-Related Homicide

Determining whether or not a homicide is drug-related is left to the discretion of the police detectives who investigate the crime. Police detectives classify a homicide based on the set of circumstances observed at the scene or revealed by witnesses and evidence. The presence of drugs in the victim's or assailant's body, and at the scene of the murder are factors considered in determining if a homicide is drug-related. However, the existence of any of these factors does not automatically classify a homicide as drug-related. Evidence must show that drugs were the motive for killing or that drugs caused the homicide, though drugs might not necessarily have been the motive.

The number of drug-related homicides has steadily increased over the past several years as the drug trade has expanded and intensified. In 1985, 21 percent of homicides were classified as drug-related. By 1987, 51 percent of homicides were drug-related. Police report several common scenarios of drug-related homicides:

A person commits murder while under the influence of drugs.

A person selling drugs on consignment is killed because he does not pay his supplier.

A drug dealer is killed because he tries to short-change his source.

An argument between a drug dealer and an unsatisfied customer results in murder.

Drug groups kill outsiders who try to take over the drug market in their territory.

A drug addict attempting to get money to support his drug habit kills someone in the process of a robbery or burglary.

A long-time drug dealer tries to get out of the drug trade, but is killed because he knows too much about the operation.

As indicated by these situations, violence is an inherent part of the drug subculture. Homicide is merely a method used to resolve problems that interrupt the flow of business. Homicide is used to create a sense of fear of reprisal, to keep people in line and show who is in control. Those who become involved in drug trafficking accept the threat of homicide as a necessary evil. The possibility of being killed is not a deterrent, but rather an unavoidable risk worth taking for the guaranteed reward of money, possessions and status.

# HOMICIDE AMONG BLACKS

**W**hile homicide is the 11th leading cause of death overall in the United States, it is the fifth leading cause of death among blacks and the leading cause of death among black males ages 15 to 34. This compares with homicide as the 13th leading cause of death for whites (Figure 6). In the District, blacks are nine times more likely than whites to be victims of homicide and eight times more likely than whites to commit homicide. In 1987, while 34 percent of the city's population was comprised of black males, 79 percent of homicide victims and 91 percent of homicide assailants were black males. Clearly, these facts point to the issue of homicide as one of particular concern for blacks, especially black males.



◀ A youth is comforted at the funeral of a 19-year old woman killed by a stray bullet outside of the Chapter III Nightclub in November of 1988.

Some psychologists suggest that racism may be a factor that increases the risk for homicide for blacks. Feelings of frustration, anger, helplessness, and low self-esteem caused by experiencing prejudice and discrimination increase the likelihood of resorting to violence. Psychological and sociological theories suggest that black-on-black violence is a manifestation of self-hatred and repressed rage that are the legacy of racism. Violence then is a way to assert one's existence and feel a sense of power in a society that systematically denies equal access to opportunities that yield real power and allow for self-determination.

Tantamount to the issue of racism in general is the issue of black-on-black homicide. In 1987, national data show that 94 percent of black victims were slain by black offenders. The race relationship between victim and offender is

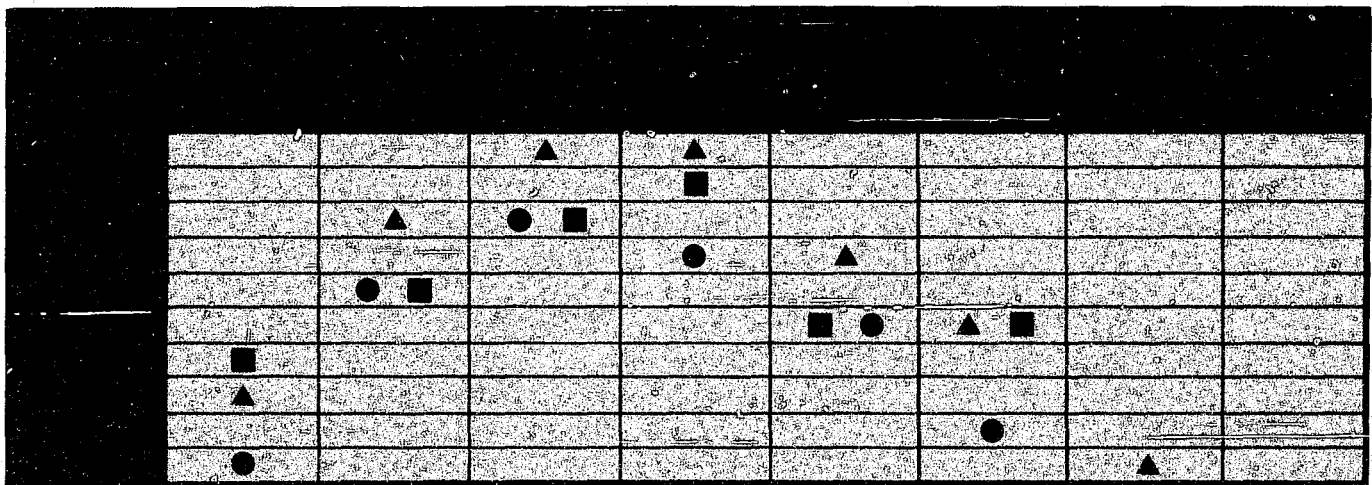
not collected for the District. However, a similar pattern would undoubtedly emerge since 90 percent of victims and 94 percent of assailants in the District during the study period were black.

The role of social class and poverty is also suggested as a factor which results in a disproportionate share of black involvement in homicide. Economic inequality theory suggests that race differences in homicide are primarily due to socioeconomic differences. Data show that victims and perpetrators of homicide tend to be people who have low incomes and less education and are unemployed, and blacks are overrepresented in these categories. National studies show that poverty is more prevalent among blacks than whites in this country. Additionally, research has shown that, when socioeconomic status is accounted for, the racial difference in

homicide rates is negligible. What needs to be better understood, however, is what factors associated with poverty increase the likelihood of involvement in homicide among low-income people.

These theories and explanations may only begin to give insight to the growing problem of homicide among blacks. Future research and prevention efforts in this area must focus on the mechanics of racism and poverty in order to gain a better working understanding of this problem as it relates to blacks in general and young, black males in particular. Emphasis should be placed more specifically on the socialization process of black males in lower-income urban settings and the environmental influences that predispose this group to involvement in homicide.

Figure 6  
Rank of Homicide as Leading Cause of Death by Race and Age



▲ Black

● White

■ Other

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Services, Center for Disease Control.

# PREVENTING HOMICIDE

**T**he concept of preventing homicide is a complex one because the factors that contribute to homicide and violence in our society are so pervasive. One can begin, however, by designing prevention strategies with the understanding that homicide is most often the end result of a process of violence and is not an isolated act. It is the often unanticipated result of assault, rape, armed robbery or burglary, child abuse, drug trafficking activity or other violence. Identifying high-risk groups and major contributing factors is primary in developing and implementing prevention strategies and programs.

Many theories and models explaining homicidal behavior have been put forth, each identifying various causal factors. Several factors contributing to homicide appear consistently: racism, unemployment, availability of handguns, alcohol and drugs, and mental and emotional problems.

Any efforts to prevent homicide and violence must involve practitioners from all fields. The District sponsored a violence intervention conference in June 1988 that brought together professionals from across the country who represented a wide range of disciplines. Some recommendations for prevention put forth at this conference include:

- ▲ Providing counseling and treatment for children and youth who witness homicide and violence so that any negative psychological and emotional impact can be addressed and minimized.
- ▲ Developing programs, counseling and treatment techniques that use an afro-centric approach to help and to motivate black youth and families to overcome circumstances and conditions that place them at high risk.
- ▲ Developing job-search programs that place persons from high-risk groups in gainful employment that will allow for financial independence and growth opportunity.
- ▲ Changing attitudes and policies outlining the manner in which police officers deal with domestic violence. Law enforcement agencies and policy makers should work with psychologists and social workers in developing methods to respond to domestic conflicts more effectively.
- ▲ Intensifying enforcement of gun control laws and passage of more gun control legislation. Common sentiment as well as research support that a significant amount of criminal violence, especially homicide, occurs simply because guns are readily available.
- ▲ Developing youth recreation, education, entertainment, and employment programs that are well staffed and supervised.
- ▲ Implementing more controls on the glorification of violence in movies, television, and music.
- ▲ Conducting more research to understand socioeconomic, psychological and cultural components of violence to determine the most effective efforts and enduring methods and strategies.
- ▲ Developing for public schools a violence prevention curriculum that helps youth learn skills in managing peer pressure and conflict.
- ▲ Developing outreach programs for community-based organizations to teach adults skills in parenting, interpersonal conflict, and managing anger and confrontations.
- ▲ Screening for victimization among people who go to public health centers. Many clinics across the country do this in an effort to identify people who have been exposed to a violent incident or lifestyle. Research shows that these people are more likely to be violent themselves. If identified, appropriate intervention and referral can be made to counseling, support groups or treatment.

## Assault and Homicide

*While it is impossible to know how many violent assaults are prevented from becoming homicides, fewer critical injury assault victims die from their wounds today than in the past. Advances in medical technology and improved communication and transportation among public safety emergency units have had a great impact on saving the lives of violence victims.*

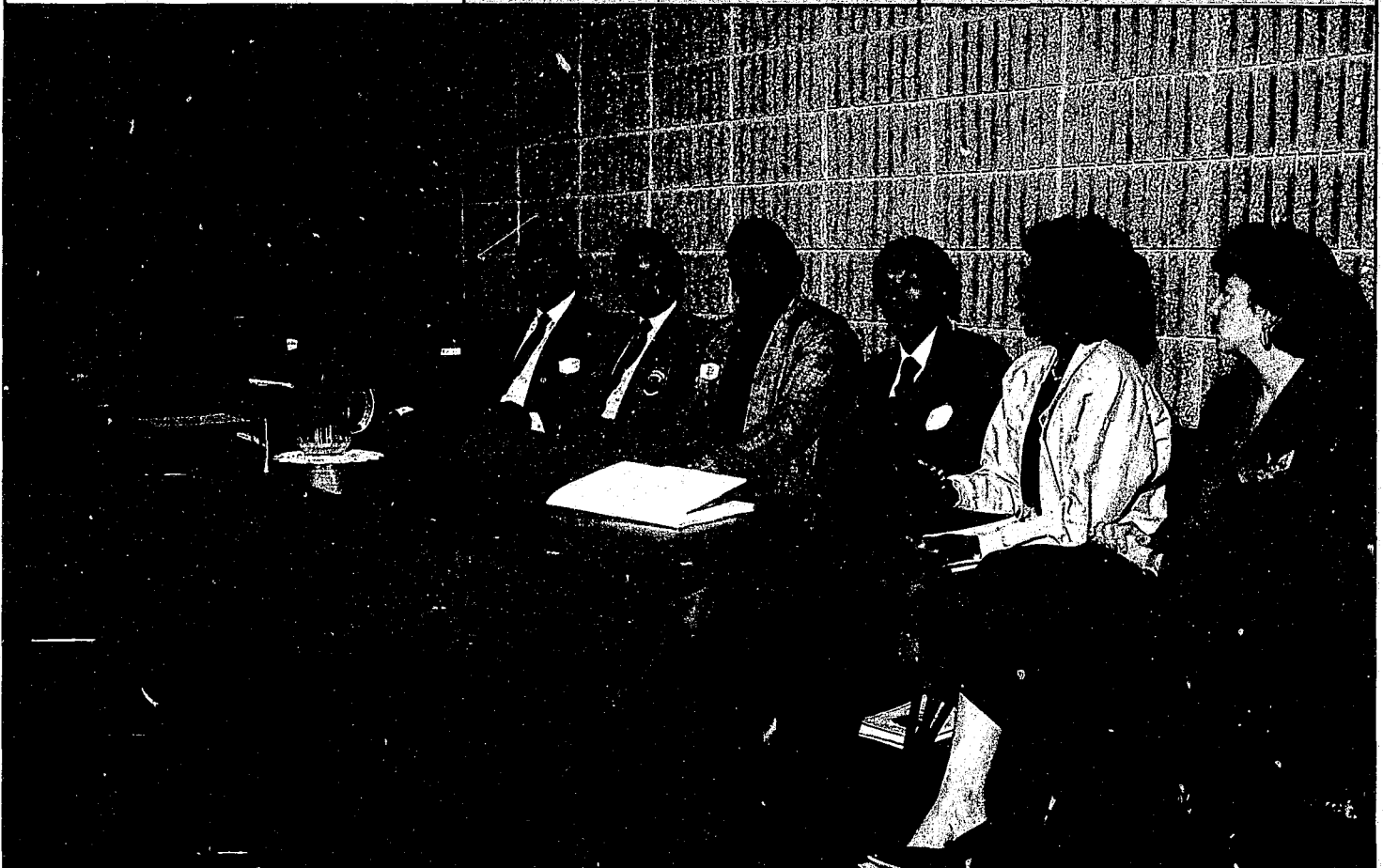
*The District has five hospital trauma units that have 24-hour teams of medical doctors and surgeons. In the District last year, there were 1,400 gunshot and stab wound cases that were treated at hospitals. These cases did not include shootings and stabbings that resulted in homicide.*

*In the past, the ambulance service was solely responsible for transporting critical injury victims to hospitals. The fact that the police can now take victims to hospitals and hospitals have helicopter transportation capabilities has significantly decreased the amount of time*

*that may pass before a victim receives medical attention. Additionally, the 911 emergency communication network has improved so that calls are processed and appropriate resources dispatched more rapidly.*

*Data for the District show a steady increase in aggravated assaults over the past 10 years, with a 22 percent increase from 4,181 in 1986 to 5,084 in 1987. Part of this increase is undoubtedly due to the increase in assaults that are prevented from becoming homicides. Were it not for advances in medical technology and improved public safety communication and transportation, one can only guess how much greater the number of homicides might be.*

Workshop panelists at the District's violence intervention conference. ▼



# DISCUSSION

**O**ver the past several years, there has been a nation-wide increase in violent crime, and in urban areas an increase in homicide. Increases in the level of violence in a nation, which already experiences one of the highest homicide rates in the western world, is cause for great concern.

The specter of violence-ridden streets, where acts of violence have become daily routines, is casting a shadow of fear and despair over many neighborhoods. While recent increases in violent crime and particularly homicide seem to be a result of numerous factors, the primary cause appears to be linked to the mushrooming illicit drug trade that has overwhelmed both the District and the rest of the nation. In the District, the proportion of drug-related homicides increased from 21 percent in 1985 to 51 percent in 1987.

In the District, both assailants and victims are most likely to be young adult black males from areas containing a high proportion of low-income families. The lure of fast money and an exciting lifestyle seem to draw many young people into the drug subculture. The huge sums of money to be made at the expense of others appear to cheapen life and contribute to the breakdown of social order.

The proliferation of lethal weapons has also played a role in the rise in homicides. Recent police seizures of weapons indicate a greater availability of high-caliber and semi-automatic guns which has resulted in a higher proportion of mortal gunshot wounds. It appears that gun dealers and drug dealers are involved in a relationship in which each depends on the other to survive.

The illicit drug market produces a subculture where members create their own code of ethics and the means to enforce. There is no legal recourse for unpaid bills in the drug world. There are no boards or committees in place to settle territorial disputes, and there is no police response when drug funds or goods are stolen. Members of the drug subculture turn to violence as the most efficient and effective solution to their problems. Failure to meet a challenge with violence in this subculture may jeopardize a person's control and encourage others to take advantage of that person when opportunities arise.

Finally, a discussion of violence and homicide should note the role of the media. For groups with minimal resources at their disposal, television and movies become a primary source of entertainment and information. Persons depicted as being highly proficient in killing are

portrayed as heroes and violence is repeatedly shown as an effective way to solve problems.

Furthermore, the violence seen in American movie theaters and on television helps to create fantasies of power and control for many who find themselves living in a grim reality where helplessness prevails. Consequently, such persons may be prone to act out their violent fantasies when frustrated, angry, or under the influence of drugs.

An important underlying cause of the high levels of violence experienced in this nation may be its prevailing values. For many, acts of aggression are linked to notions of manhood and selfhood. When someone thinks he has been unfairly treated, violence is often perceived as a legitimate means to correct the situation. Many also believe that acquiring wealth is most important, and that anything one can do without getting caught, including homicide, is acceptable in pursuit of that goal.

The District's homicide problem has not been ignored by its local government or its residents. The District's Commission of Public Health established the Task Force on Victimization and Community Violence, which enlisted the help of national experts to study the problem and develop solutions. The Metropolitan Police Department is making improvements in its Homicide Division to make more homicide arrests, and homicide prevention programs are in the planning stages. Citizens have also formed groups that are interested in working with families of homicide victims and with young people who are high risks as both victims and assailants.

A purpose of this report is to heighten awareness of the homicide problem. Often, when a social problem worsens and there is no improvement over a period of time, the general public develops a new level of tolerance for that problem. It is imperative that violence and homicide never become accepted as uncontrollable and unavoidable elements in the District's communities, and that fear, despair and loss of life never become tolerated as a part of daily living experiences. It is essential that the homicide problem be kept in focus by the public and that the various segments of the community come together to meet the challenge of reducing homicide.



## **Investigating Homicides**

Homicide investigation is a specialized function that is undertaken by the District's Metropolitan Police Department, the Medical Examiner's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office. The police are concerned with the identification and arrest of the killer, the medical examiner is concerned with investigating the cause of death, and the U.S. attorney oversees the prosecution of the case.

### **Police Detectives**

Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) detectives from the Homicide Branch and the Mobile Crime Unit are immediately called to the scene of all homicides, except in the case of vehicular homicide, to which detectives from the Traffic Division respond.

The District's police homicide detectives are trained in all of the proven traditional techniques of detection and investigation and have ongoing training in the technological advances in solving homicides. They are trained in how to interview and interrogate, perform crime scene investigation, gather and process evidence, obtain latent prints, and conduct ballistics and polygraphy tests. They must also have an understanding of forensic pathology. The detective assigned to a particular case watches the autopsy and the Mobile Crime Unit goes to the Medical Examiners Office to conduct further forensic investigations including blood and hair tests, genetic mapping, fingerprinting, bullet recovery, and clothing examination.

Police homicide detectives must also be trained to know and observe the defendant's rights at all phases of the investigation, including interrogation and taking statements, confessions and admissions, search and seizure, eye-witness identification, line-up and wire-tap procedures, preparations of a case for trial, and testifying. Police investigators must keep abreast of all applicable court decisions, legal interpretations and procedural restrictions so that any evidence gathered is not subject to being ruled inadmissible because of the manner in which it was obtained.

Once the police detectives have fully investigated a homicide, a suspect hopefully can be identified. If this is the case, a warrant affidavit is presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office and, if approved, police attempt to make an arrest. For vehicular homicide, an arrest is often-times made at the scene because the perpetrator is still present. It is investigated in the manner of a homicide, but technically handled as a traffic crime until it is referred to the U.S. Attorney's Office for determination of status and further processing.

### **The Medical Examiner**

The Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) is also responsible for examining the scene where the body is located. The winner of the District government's 1987 Award for Outstanding Unit of the Year, the Autopsy Technician Unit is called to the scene along with the police to investigate. While police investigators may focus more on circumstances surrounding the incident and clues possibly linked with the assailant, autopsy technicians look for identification marks on the body, the number and types of wounds, and other victim-related information. Once investigators record the details of the scene, autopsy technicians remove the body, or remains of the body, from the scene to the MEO.

Regardless of the condition of a body, every homicide victim undergoes an autopsy. An autopsy is a process by which a medical doctor trained in forensic pathology internally and externally examines the body to reveal the actual cause of death and other information that will provide evidence and clues to the homicide act itself.

After the medical examiner's report of what was found inside and on the victim is filed, the body is released to the family. The process usually takes no longer than 48 hours.

### **The U.S. Attorney**

The U.S. Attorney's Office is first involved with a District homicide when the MPD presents a warrant affidavit for approval. If a homicide is believed to be a first degree murder, referral is made

to the Felony Trial Division. If a homicide is believed to be a second degree murder, voluntary or involuntary manslaughter, it is referred to the Grand Jury Division. Negligent homicide cases are referred to the Grand Jury Division after indictment.

All warrant applications are reviewed before approval. If it is determined that more information is needed, the case is returned to the police with a request for further investigation. If the investigation seems sufficient, the warrant is approved and signed by the judge.

First degree murder cases are assigned to a prosecutor who handles the case throughout its processing. Second degree murder and manslaughter cases are first assigned to a line investigator, who handles the case until the return of an indictment, and then assigned to a prosecutor who handles the case from arraignment through sentencing.

In all homicide cases, the U.S. Attorney's Office conducts further pre-indictment investigations. The investigation information provided by the police is reviewed, many witnesses are re-interviewed, attempts are made to identify new witnesses, and checks are made to ensure that evidence has been analyzed properly. Based on these investigations, the U.S. attorney makes the final determination of the category of homicide into which a case falls and, in the case of traffic death, determines if it is labeled a homicide or a traffic fatality.

Most homicide cases are solved within a relatively short period of time, but recent data show that investigation time is increasing. From 1984 through 1986, 68 percent of homicides were closed within 60 days and 36 percent within 24 hours. For 1987 and 1988, the amount of cases closed within these time periods decreased. Only 58 percent of all homicides through June of 1988 had been solved. The number of homicides in general has increased and the number of drug-related homicides has escalated and, while there is more investigative time needed to solve these cases, the resources to conduct investigations have not increased.

# REVIEW OF FINDINGS

**H**omicide in the District of Columbia provides a compilation of statistical information and a review of homicide-related issues. This study includes an analysis of homicide victims, assailants, methods and motives, time and locations, and victim-assailant relationships. Issues discussed cover topics ranging from homicide among blacks to homicide prevention.

The estimated number of homicides in the United States in 1987 totaled 20,096. There were 3 percent fewer homicides reported nation-wide in 1987 as compared with 1986. However, since 1983 there has been a 4 percent increase in the national homicide count. The United States has one of the highest homicide rates in the world.

In the District, the number of homicides has increased from 148 in 1985 to 225 in 1987. The homicide rate continued its rise in 1988 and reached an all-time high.

Victims of homicide over the past four years were most likely to be black males between the ages of 18 and 25. Toxicology data indicate that about 63 percent of the victims had some type of drug or alcohol in their systems at the time of their deaths. In 1988, about 45 percent of the

victims were found to be using cocaine. This is a remarkable increase from 1985 when 17 percent of victims were found with cocaine in their systems.

Persons arrested for homicide were also most likely to be black males between the ages of 18 and 25. In 1987, 30 percent of the arrestees tested positive for cocaine while 18 percent tested positive for PCP.

A greater proportion of homicides took place on weekend days and most homicides occurred between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. In this six-hour interval, the largest percentage of homicides occurred between 9 p.m. and midnight.

Guns are overwhelmingly the weapon of choice in the District and nationally. Based on evidence confiscated by police, nine millimeter guns are the most common. Over the past 3 years, about two thirds of the District's homicide victims were killed with guns. About one fourth were killed by stabbing.

Most homicide victims knew their assailants. While the victim-assailant relationship in the majority of cases in the study period remain unknown, of those reported, most victims were the relatives, friends or acquaintances of their assailants.

Since 1985, about 66 percent of the victims were killed at their own residences with the majority occurring outside rather than inside. Thus far, in 1988, 30 percent of the victims were killed outside their own residences, 34 percent were found inside and 36 percent were killed away from home.

Data collected on homicide motives show some significant changes over the past several years. During 1985, 49 percent of homicides resulted from altercations while 21 percent were robbery-related and 21 percent were drug-related. By June 1988, the percent of drug-related homicides increased to 80 percent while homicides resulting from altercations declined to 7 percent.

It is suggested that the growing use of illicit drugs and the expanding illegal drug market are major contributing factors to increases in the District's homicide rate. It is also suggested that the proliferation and easy availability of lethal weapons, changing moral standards, and violence depicted in the media affect homicide rates and a community's tolerance of homicides.

**Number of Homicides by Census Tract  
CY 1985 — June 1988**

Census Tract	Ward	Homicides
1.0	2	2
2.0	2	2
3.0	3	1
4.0	3	0
5.2	3	0
6.0	3	0
7.1	3	0
7.2	3	1
8.1	3	0
8.2	3	0
9.1	3	0
9.2	3	0
10.1	3	0
10.2	3	0
11.0	3	2
12.0	3	0
13.1	3	0
13.2	3	2
14.0	3	0
15.0	3	0
16.0	4	0
17.0	4	2
18.1	4	0
18.3	4	0
18.4	4	1
19.1	4	0
19.2	4	1
20.1	4	2
20.2	4	1
21.1	4	5
21.2	4	2
22.1	4	2
22.2	4	3
23.1	4	3
23.1	4	1
24.0	4	0
25.1	4	4
25.2	4	2
26.0	4	1
27.1	1	3
27.2	1	2
28.0	1	9
29.0	1	6
30.0	1	6
31.0	1	5
32.0	1	10
33.1	5	7

**APPENDIX**

# APPENDIX

## Number of Homicides by Census Tract CY 1985 — June 1988 (Continued)

Census Tract	Ward	Homicides
33.2	5	2
34.0	1	6
35.0	1	1
36.0	1	14
37.0	1	21
38.0	1	9
39.0	1	2
40.0	1	1
41.0	1	0
42.1	1	4
42.2	2	0
43.0	1	5
44.0	1	10
45.0	1	7
46.0	5	6
47.0	2	5
48.1	2	6
48.2	2	4
49.1	2	2
49.2	2	13
50.0	2	3
51.0	2	5
51.0	1	5
52.1	2	5
52.2	2	0
52.3	2	0
53.1	2	2
53.2	2	3
54.1	2	5
54.2	2	0
55.1	2	1
55.2	2	0
56.0	2	0
57.1	2	0
57.2	2	1
58.0	2	5
59.0	2	2
60.1	2	1
60.2	2	0
61.0	2	0
62.0	2	2
62.1	2	0
62.2	2	1
63.1	2	2
63.2	2	0
64.0	2	5
65.0	6	0

**Number of Homicides by Census Tract  
CY 1985 — June 1988 (Continued)**

Census Tract	Ward	Homicides
66.0	6	0
67.0	6	2
68.2	6	4
68.4	6	0
69.0	6	4
70.0	6	5
71.0	6	8
72.0	2	14
73.1	8	0
73.2	8	11
73.4	8	8
73.8	8	0
74.0	8	0
74.1	8	8
74.4	8	13
74.5	8	11
74.6	8	6
74.7	8	4
74.8	8	9
75.1	6	16
75.2	6	8
76.1	6	5
76.3	7	3
76.4	7	2
76.5	6	7
77.2	7	1
77.3	7	7
77.7	7	2
77.8	6	1
77.9	6	3
78.3	7	5
78.4	7	4
78.5	7	1
78.7	7	8
78.8	7	8
79.1	6	8
79.3	6	4
80.1	6	1
80.2	6	1
81.0	6	1
81.2	6	1
82.0	6	0
83.1	6	3
83.2	6	2
84.0	6	0
84.2	6	2
85.0	2	8

# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX

## Number of Homicides by Census Tract CY 1985—June 1988 (Continued)

Census Tract	Ward	Homicides
86.0	2	1
87.1	5	9
87.2	5	1
88.0	5	1
88.2	5	5
88.3	5	4
88.4	5	3
89.3	5	2
89.4	5	5
90.1	5	2
90.2	5	5
91.1	5	5
91.2	5	12
92.1	5	0
92.2	5	6
93.1	5	0
93.2	5	4
94.0	5	3
95.1	4	1
95.2	5	1
95.3	5	1
95.5	4	0
95.7	4	0
95.8	5	0
96.0	8	1
96.1	7	6
96.2	7	9
96.3	7	8
96.4	7	2
97.0	8	8
98.1	8	9
98.2	8	3
98.3	8	5
98.4	8	4
98.5	8	4
98.6	8	13
98.7	8	11
98.8	8	4
99.1	7	1
99.2	7	4
99.3	7	4
99.4	7	13
99.5	7	1
99.6	7	0
99.7	7	4



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 Johnson • Delory Johnson • Larry  
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 • John Jones • Michael Jones • Claudell  
 Jones • Wesley Jones • Lorenzo Jones •  
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 Jones • Alphonzo Jones • Chester Joppy  
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 William Powell • Keith Price • Melvin  
 Price • Winfred Price • George Pringle  
 • Carrie Prinrose • Ronald Proctor •  
 William Proctor • Ronald Proctor •  
 Herbert Purdie • Joseph Queen • Mark  
 Quinn • Albert Radford • Germaine  
 Eagland • Rodney Ragland • Kevin  
 Raigns • Rickey Railey • Gretta Rainey  
 • Ian Rammand • Steven Ramsey •  
 Keith Rawls • Bertie Ray • Darryl Ray •  
 Tracy Reddick • Lenard Reese • William  
 Reid • Robert Remington • Carolyn  
 Resper • Steven Reynolds • James  
 Richardson • Jerry Richmond • Anthony  
 Riddick • Booker Riddick • Jerome  
 Riggins • Anthony Riley • Nathaniel  
 Rivers • Waverly Robertson • Dana  
 Robertson • Darryl Robinson • Arnold  
 Robinson • Larry Robinson • Shorn  
 Rochester • Violet Rodney • Robert  
 Rogers • John Rogers • Anthony Roney  
 • Victoria Ross • Vincent Roye • Stephen  
 Royster • Patrick Rudd • Donald Ruffin  
 • Edward Rusboldt • Charles Russell •  
 Bernard Russell • Oscar Sanchez • Brian  
 Sanders • Mackie Sanders • Kridikorn  
 Satamarn • Michael Saunders • Leonard  
 Scoggins • Theodore Scott • Teryl Scott  
 • William Scott • Gwendolyn Scott •  
 Sherman Scott • Gregory Scott •  
 Fransisco Sealy • Mark Settles • Abdul  
 Shaban • Phillip Shammill • Angela  
 Shaw • Robert Shelton • Darrenna  
 Shelton • Sabrina Shelton • Alex Shim  
 • Walter Short • Sean Shorts • Raymond  
 Shoulders • Paul Shreeves • Leroy  
 Simms • James Singleton • Brenda  
 Slade • David Sloan • Reginald Smalls  
 • Edgar Smith • Reginald Smith • Paul

Smith • Jesse Smith • Griffin Smith  
 • Garvin Smith • Bernard Smith •  
 George Smith • Sean Smith • Ernest  
 Smith • William Snoots • Daniel Snope  
 • Janice Spain • Robert Speidel • Leon  
 Spencer • Gail Spencer • Kevin Spriggs  
 • Lucious Stackhouse • Earl Starks •  
 Ella Starks • Trever Stephenson • Gary  
 Stevens • Kael Stewart • Robert Stewart  
 • Jan Stransky • Inez Strong • Shirley  
 Summers • Michael Sumpter • Willie  
 Sutton • Horace Swarn • Linda Tapley  
 • James Taylor • Simmion Taylor •  
 Roland Taylor • Duane Taylor • Kenneth  
 Taylor • Brandon Terrell • Lauthen  
 Terwick • Allen Thacker • Linda Thies  
 • James Thomas • Calvin Thomas •  
 Anthony Thomas • Gerald Thompkins  
 • Carlton Thompson • Robert Thompson  
 • Desi Thompson • Beverly Thompson •  
 Walter Thompson • Brenda Tibbs • Kelly  
 Tillery • Bernard Timbers • R.T. Tinsley  
 • Ernset Tolbert • Darrien Tomoney •  
 Jeffrey Truesdale • John Trusdale •  
 Samuel Tucker • Henry Turner • Dewitt  
 Turner • Yvonne Tutt • Cornell Twilley •  
 Mattew Tyson • Michale Vaughn •  
 Douglas Vaughn • Marquita Vaughn •  
 Tyrone Venable • Edward Venable •  
 Douglas Vines • Matthew Walker •  
 Deborah Walker • William Walker •  
 James Walker • Burrell Walker • Carrie  
 Wall • Tony Wallace • Charles Wallace •  
 William Ward • Michael Ward • Charles  
 Ward • Darnell Ward • Anthony Warner •  
 Deandre Washington • Ricardo  
 Washington • Martin Washington •  
 Lonnie Watkins • Yvonne Watts •  
 Calvin Weaver • James Webster • Leslie  
 Wheeler • Reginald White • Clarence  
 Whitefield • Charles Whittington •  
 Michelle Wilkerson • Alton Wilkinson •  
 Carrie Willaims • Leedonyell Williams •  
 Francis Williams • Christopher Williams  
 • Braddock Williams • Joseph Williams  
 • Richard Williams • Vincent Williams  
 • Mark Williams • Darrell Williams •  
 Claude Williams • Osborn Williams •  
 Thomas Williams • Mark Williams •  
 Harold Williams • Joseph Williams •  
 Michael Williams • Samuel Williams •  
 Jeffrey Williams • Nathaniel Williams  
 • Steven Wilson • Darryl Wilson • Ervin  
 Wilson • Curtis Wilson • Dwayne  
 Winslow • Dwayne Winslow • Larry  
 Wise • James Wolfe • Gina Wood •  
 James Wood • John Woods • Leon  
 Woodward • Ernest Workman • Leon  
 Wright • Cecelia Wyatt • William  
 Wynn • Mo Yi • Hee Yoo • John Young  
 • Roy Young • Sheng Yu • Gui Zhang  
 • Gao Zhou