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Murder is No Mystery

An Analysis of Philadelphia Homicide, 1996-1999

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**Police Commissioner and Secretary of Public Safety
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A Message from John F. Timoney

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the number of people murdered in America's major cities began to drop. This decline was not evenly distributed, however, and some cities, such as Philadelphia, Baltimore and Chicago, saw their homicide rates remain flat or even increase. Throughout the 1990s, Philadelphia's annual homicide rate hovered around the low 400s, a relatively high number for a city its size. In 1997, for example, the year before I took over as Philadelphia's Police Commissioner, the city had 418 homicides, more than half as many as New York, despite the fact that New York has five times as many residents. I was so disturbed by these numbers that, within a few months of taking over as Police Commissioner, I asked for an in-depth study of all the homicides that had taken place in Philadelphia in the previous three years. I wanted to know as much as I could about them: Who were the victims? How old were they? Where did they live? When were they murdered? Why? By whom?

It took a long time to get the answers to these questions, mainly because the information I asked for was buried in mountains of paper, most of which had been filed away as soon as the cases had been closed. But an advantage of taking time is that we were able to include data on a fourth year of murders, those that had occurred in 1999.

This volume represents an extraordinary piece of research and I am very grateful to those at the Philadelphia Police Department and Public/Private Ventures, our partners in this project who produced the report. It vastly extends our knowledge about the homicides that took place in this city over the last four years and will, I hope, help us to continue to drive down the homicide rate in Philadelphia. It is also relevant to those who study homicides and try to prevent them elsewhere in this country and abroad.

Although this report is full of facts and figures that I find fascinating and instructive, I want to point out three of the report's most troubling findings for those of us working and living in Philadelphia. The first is how many of our murderers, and their victims, are children and young adults. Of the 1,038 people arrested for murder in Philadelphia from 1996 to 1999, 64 percent were under age 25. Of the 1,460 victims, 42 percent were under age 25, including 8 percent who were under 18. This trend continued in 2000, as 38 percent of the Philadelphians murdered never saw their 25th birthdays. This is both an enormous tragedy and a great challenge.

As Mayor John F. Street said recently, "Nothing is more important than the lives of our children. Their promise and potential rest firmly in our willingness and ability to protect, provide for and prepare them. The future of our city can be no brighter than the opportunity it provides for its future citizens. As Mayor, I accept this reality and the responsibility that follows." The Police Department, as the Mayor's lead law enforcement agency, sees its primary mission as providing this protection for our children. But we and the Mayor also recognize that the Police Department cannot do the job alone. We need the help of the rest of the criminal justice system and the support of all Philadelphians.

A second noteworthy finding is the extraordinarily high proportion of murders in Philadelphia committed with handguns. Almost 80 percent of our homicides were committed with handguns; for those involving young victims, the figure is closer to 90 percent. These figures are among the highest of any of the big cities in the United States. In New York, for example, only about 60 percent of homicides involve guns, as guns are significantly harder to get in that city.

We in the Philadelphia Police Department have made tremendous efforts to get guns off our streets and in this we have been supported by District Attorney Lynne Abraham and the U.S. Attorney. But there will

continue to be easy availability of guns and easy access to them until the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania amends its present gun laws. Unlike New York, where most of the guns recovered by the police come from other states, in Philadelphia, most of the guns that we recover come from right here in Pennsylvania. I have argued for tougher, but reasonable, gun laws since I became Police Commissioner and my experience over the past three years has simply confirmed my view that such laws could lead to a significant reduction in the level of violence in this city. I will continue this fight at every opportunity.

The third finding is one that I believe offers the most immediate opportunity to reduce homicides in our city. In a sample of 100 murders committed in the 25th police district in the four years of the study, more than half of those arrested for these murders were either on probation, awaiting trial or awaiting sentencing at the time that the murder was committed; that is, they were already in the criminal justice system. In particular, 25 percent were on probation at the time they were arrested for murder, while 29 percent were awaiting trial or sentencing.

This is a shocking indictment of our criminal justice system. But it also poses a tremendous challenge for all of us in the system. It shows clearly that we have to work together if we are to make our city a safer place.

Mayor Street has shown that he understands this. It was precisely to encourage and facilitate cooperation between the various parts of the criminal justice system that, in one of his first decisions as Mayor, he created the position of Secretary of Public Safety with a mission to oversee the whole of the criminal justice system. I am proud to occupy this post. I regard it as crucial to making Philadelphia the safest large city in the nation.

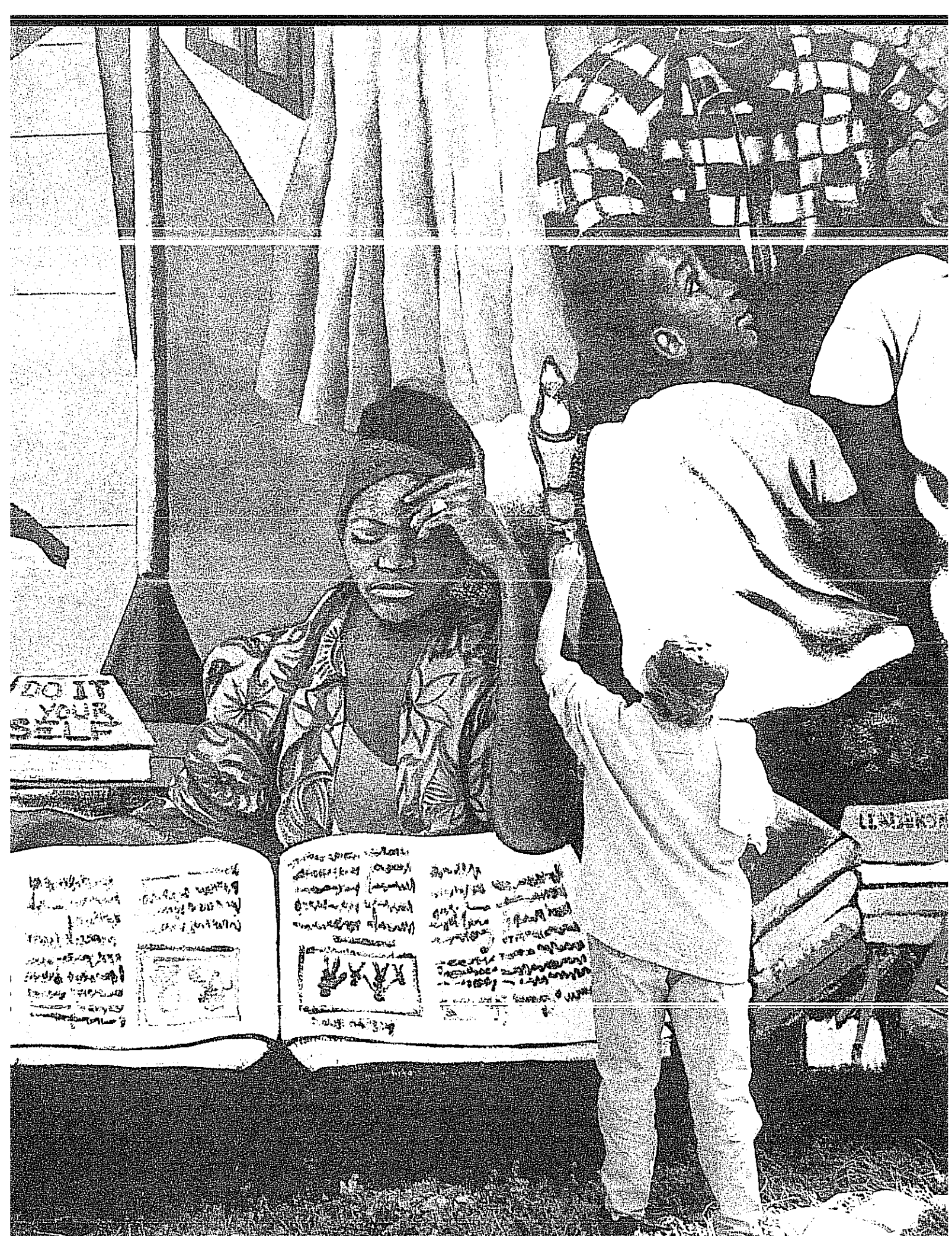
I say this because I have seen a multi-agency approach to tackling homicides work in Philadelphia. The Youth Violence Reduction Program (YVRP) in the 24th and 25th Police Districts in East Philadelphia has significantly reduced homicides of young people by bringing together the Police Department, District Attorney's Office, Juvenile and Adult Probation and a number of non-governmental agencies such as P.A.A.N. (Philadelphia Anti-Drug Anti-Violence Network), Public/Private Ventures and Philadelphia Safe and Sound, as well as local clergy and others. This innovative project, which began in June 1999, targets the youth in these areas identified as being at greatest risk to kill or be killed. It combines intensive support with intensive surveillance including weekly targeted patrols, where, for the first time, police officers and probation officers together visit the "Youth Partners" in their homes to ensure that they are in compliance with the conditions of their probation. During these visits, the officers also talk to them about what services they need to get their lives together.

Of the 300 or so youth in the YVRP, only one has been killed and one has been charged with vehicular homicide since June 1999. Clearly, this program works. It must be expanded. It saves lives.

As I said earlier, Philadelphia's homicide rate has long been high by national standards. But as our efforts have shown, this need not be so. This is the challenge posed by this report. We must rise to it.

John F. Timoney
Police Commissioner and Secretary of Public Safety, City of Philadelphia

Section One: Introduction	1
Section Two: The Data	7
Part One: The Body Count	8
8 1.1 The Concentration of Murders, 1996-1999	
9 1.2 Murders by Police District, 1996-1999	
10 1.3 Murders per Year, 1960-1999	
10 1.4 Murder Rate (per 100,000)	
11 1.5 Six Key Murder Motives, 1996-1999	
Part Two: The Alleged Murderers	12
12 2.1 The Age of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
12 2.2 The Gender of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
12 2.3 The Race of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
13 2.4 Racial Profile: The City versus Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
13 2.5 Alleged Murderers: Males 18 to 24 versus All Others, 1996-1999	
14 2.6 Age and Race of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
14 2.7 Age and Gender of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
15 2.8 Criminal Histories among a Random Sample of 25th Police District Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
15 2.9 Criminal History Breakdown among a Random Sample of 25th Police District Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
15 2.10 Parole, Probation and Trial Status among a Random Sample of 25th Police District Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
Part Three: The Murder Victims	16
16 3.1 The Age of Victims, 1996-1999	
16 3.2 The Gender of Victims, 1996-1999	
16 3.3 The Race of Victims, 1996-1999	
17 3.4 Victims: Men Aged 18 to 34 versus All Others, 1996-1999	
17 3.5 Age and Race of Murder Victims, 1996-1999	
17 3.6 Age and Gender of Murder Victims, 1996-1999	
18 3.7 Criminal Histories for a Random Sample of 25th Police District Murder Victims, 1996-1999	
18 3.8 Criminal History Breakdown for a Random Sample of 25th Police District Murder Victims, 1996-1999	
18 3.9 Probation, Parole, and Trial Status for a Random Sample of 25th Police District Murder Victims, 1996-1999	
Part Four: The Scene of the Crime	19
19 4.1 The Locations of Murders, 1996-1999	
19 4.2 When Murders Occur: Time of Day, 1996-1999	
19 4.3 When Murders Occur: Day of Week, 1996-1999	
20 4.4 When Murders Occur: Month of Year, 1996-1999	
20 4.5 Times of Youth Murders versus All Others, 1996-1999	
20 4.6 Months of Youth Murders versus All Others, 1996-1999	
Part Five: The Crime Itself	21
21 5.1 Same-Race Murders versus Interracial Murders, 1996-1999	
21 5.2 Race: Victims and Their Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999	
22 5.3 Gender of Alleged Murderer versus Gender of Victim, 1996-1999	
22 5.4 Age of Victim versus Age of Alleged Murderer, 1996-1999	
24 5.5 The Motives Behind Murders, 1996-1999	
25 5.6 Motives for Killing Men versus Motives for Killing Women, 1996-1999	
25 5.7 Motives for Youth Murders, 1996-1999	
26 5.8 The Method of Murders, 1996-1999	
26 5.9 Percentage of Murder Victims Killed with Handguns, by Age, 1996-1999	
26 5.10 Methods Used to Kill Female and Male Murder Victims, 1996-1999	
27 5.11 The Methods for Different Races, 1996-1999	
27 5.12 Number of Handgun Homicides, 1996-1999	
27 5.13 Handgun Homicides as Percentage of Total Homicides, 1996-1999	
Part Six: The Aftermath	28
28 6.1 Cleared versus Uncleared Homicides, 1996-1999	
29 6.2 Homicide Clearance by Race of Victim, 1996-1999	
29 6.3 Homicide Clearance by Gender of Victim, 1996-1999	
Section Three: Policy Recommendations	31



Introduction

Philadelphia, it is said, is becoming a city of murals. Colorful and grand, they can be found everywhere. Some celebrate youth and achievement. Some celebrate dignity and hope.

Some celebrate dead young men.

Visit any of the sprawling neighborhoods that surround Philadelphia's reviving center, and you will find ample evidence of the crime that stalks them. From 1996 to 1999, a span of 1,461 days, 1,460 people were murdered in Philadelphia.¹ According to the FBI, Philadelphia's homicide rate for 1998—26 homicides for every 100,000 residents—was the fourth highest among major U.S. metropolitan areas. Philadelphians were murdered more often than residents of New York City or Los Angeles. The vast majority of these crimes took place in the city's poorest neighborhoods, which is why memorial murals still spring up regularly in North, West and Southwest Philadelphia.

And the tragedy of it all is that murder, in this city at least, is not exactly a mystery. A look at the homicides committed between 1996 and 1999 reveals a pattern: 9 out of 10 victims were men, and over half were young men between 18 and 34 years old. Three victims out of four were African American. Four victims out of five were shot to death with handguns. Virtually all alleged murderers were the same race as their victims, with over 90 percent of African Americans dying at the hands of another African American. One killing in four was directly related to drugs, and another quarter were the result of what the police identified as "arguments." Most of the victims and killers probably had histories of violent crime, drug and weapons arrests. It's possible

that as many as half of the murderers were actually on probation or parole or awaiting trial or sentencing at the time they killed their victims. Arrests were made for close to two-thirds of these killings, but more than a quarter of all homicides remain "uncleared."

And no statistic will show it, but the chances that a given killer will eventually get his own mural are probably pretty good. If this went on in your neighborhood, would you stay? Would you go out at night? Would you consider leaving the neighborhood, or even the city, if you could?

Of course you would.

The report that follows, undertaken at the request of the Philadelphia Police Department, is based on official police homicide data. It attempts to answer some basic questions: who is killing whom, and where and why? It attempts to profile the alleged murderers and their victims, and to sort out killings by age, race and sex. It is presented with the hope that a clear analysis of the 1,460 murders committed over the past four years can help police, public officials and community-based organizations effectively target their efforts to reduce that violence.

Every crime is its own puzzle. But given what we know about murder in Philadelphia, it would be wrong to say that it is a complete mystery. Thus, we encourage readers to remember while picking through this report's charts, graphs and numbers that the most important question is not what is happening. The most important question is, what are we going to do about it?

Good News, Bad News

The good news for Philadelphia is that homicides are down in recent years. After peaking in 1990, when over 500 Philadelphians died violently, the numbers dropped to 420 in 1996 and then to 296 in 1999.² That is the lowest number since 1985.

The bad news is more complicated. First, the number of homicides has begun to rise once again. In 2000, 319 Philadelphia deaths were ruled homicides, a rise of 8 percent over the previous year. That's not quite a murder a day, but it is more than six murders per week.

Second, it does not appear that any substantial change has been made in the pattern of murders, even when the numbers were down. Public/Private Ventures' (P/PV) analysis of Philadelphia Police Department homicide data does not show dramatic reductions in any particular kind of murder. Drug-related killings have consistently accounted for about a quarter to a third of the total. Domestic homicides consistently account for about 10 percent. Between a quarter and a third of killings are the result of arguments. Four out of five are consistently committed with handguns. The overall profile remains roughly the same, even as the number dips.

Third, the examination of police data reveals a number of disturbing patterns, many of which are already obvious to those who work the streets every day.

- **Murder is intensely concentrated in the city's poorest neighborhoods.**

Forty-nine percent of Philadelphia's homicides from 1996 to 1999 took place in five police districts: the 12th, 19th, 22nd, 25th and 35th. On its own, the 25th accounts for one murder out of every six, or 17 percent of all homicides. The maps on pages 8 and 9 show the disparity quite clearly. Certain parts of the city can go for years with only a few killings. In others, the body count is nothing short of appalling.

- **Young people are killing and being killed.**

Murder in Philadelphia is a crime of youth, particularly of young men. From 1996 to 1999, more than 9 out of 10 (94%) of all alleged murderers were men. Over half (53%) were between 18 and 24 years old. Add the fact that 10 percent of murders were committed by juveniles aged 12 to 17, and it emerges that two out of three murders are committed by young people, mostly young men.

The victims are more diverse, but still predominantly young. One-third of all victims (34%) were 18 to 24 years old. More than a quarter (27%) were 25 to 34, and 6 percent were between 12 and 17.³ In other words, two out of every three victims were 12 to 34 years old.

- **Handguns are the weapon of choice.**

More than three out of four Philadelphia murder victims are shot to death with handguns—77 percent of the total. The numbers are even higher for young victims; among those 18 to 24 years old, almost 9 out of 10

(88%) die by handguns. While the overall number of handgun deaths is down (228 in 1999 as compared with 320 in 1996), they made up about the same percentage of murders in each year of the study: roughly 75 percent.

- **Many murders are committed by people on probation, on parole or awaiting sentencing.**

The overarching theme from a review of the case files of a random sample of 100 individuals (see Appendix B) arrested for homicides that occurred in the 25th police district, the highest crime police district in Philadelphia, is clear: the criminal justice system already had their hands on a significant number of alleged murderers before they committed the crime.

A majority of the alleged murderers in our sample were either under the supervision of a probation or parole officer¹ or awaiting trial or sentencing at the time that they committed a murder. Twenty-five percent of them were on probation or parole at the time that they committed a murder, and 29 percent were awaiting trial or awaiting sentencing at the time they committed a murder.

- **Murderers and victims alike often have criminal histories.**

Our examination of the criminal and court histories of 100 randomly selected murder victims and 100 randomly selected alleged murderers showed that many have criminal backgrounds.

Among alleged murderers, almost 9 out of 10 (86%) had criminal records. Close

to half had been charged with either violent offenses and/or weapons offenses, and 57 percent had been charged with drug offenses.

Victims were less likely to have criminal backgrounds, but still, over half (52%) had been charged with at least one offense prior to their murder. On average, those homicide victims who had criminal histories had 3.7 arrests prior to their death.

- **Young African-American men run an extraordinary risk of becoming killers or being killed.**

One cannot discuss murder in Philadelphia without discussing race. Between 1996 and 1999, three out of four murder victims were African American, despite the fact that less than half of the city's population is African American. Out of 1,460 homicides, 1,083 victims were African American (74%). In contrast, 191 victims were Hispanic (13%), 158 were Caucasian (11%) and 28 were Asian American (2%).

Furthermore, three out of four of the alleged murderers were African American (76%). Less than one-fifth (17%) were Hispanic, 1 in 20 was Caucasian (5%) and 1 in 50 was Asian American (2%).

Thus, murder in Philadelphia consists primarily of black-on-black violence. Of all the African Americans murdered, 95 percent were killed by another African American. Seventy-seven percent of Hispanic murder victims were killed by another Hispanic. Caucasians and Asian Americans, on the other hand, were both more likely to be murdered by an

individual of another race. Forty-eight percent of Asian Americans were killed by another Asian American, and 44 percent of Caucasians were killed by another Caucasian.

Altogether, from 1996 to 1999, African-American males aged 18 to 24 constituted 2 percent of the city's population, 24 percent of its murder victims (354 in total) and 40 percent of its alleged murderers (416 in total).

What Is to Be Done?

There is an obvious problem with information like that above: it's one thing to learn about past murders; it's quite another to stop the murders that are yet to happen. Looking at statistics, we can say where the next murder is going to be—almost. We can say when, and even why—almost. We can say who is going to be involved on each side of the trigger—almost. But do we know enough to actually step between a killer and his victim and stop the crime? No.

This does not mean, however, that constructive intervention is impossible. Plenty of examples, both in Philadelphia and other jurisdictions, show that law enforcement agencies and other public institutions can take steps to reduce the number of homicides, not only with improved policing tactics but also with better coordination and cooperation among local government, state government and community-based organizations of all kinds.

In Section Three of this report, we offer some specific recommendations for such steps that are based on the following three principles:

- **Contain the problem: Communities deserve better protection from dangerous individuals.**

Among the most shocking findings in this research is the fact that so many alleged murderers were involved with the justice system at the time of their crime, whether they were on probation or awaiting trial or sentencing. Clearly, the time is ripe for a closer look at the systems that oversee offenders, in particular, the probation system. Every effort must be made to transform that system into one that can help to minimize the violent crimes perpetrated by those in its care.

- **Prevent the problem: Young people need to be diverted from violent patterns before they prove fatal.**

The high number of murder victims and killers who had previous criminal histories underscores the fact that the “system” had an opportunity to intervene in their lives before the homicides but either chose not to intervene or intervened ineffectively. In response, we recommend identifying young people with criminal records that suggest they are at risk of killing or being killed and getting them involved with programs and initiatives that can help put them on a path toward a productive adult life.

● **Make those involved accountable: The public and private organizations charged with maintaining public safety need to measure and report their performance.**

Probation departments and police departments, along with many nonprofit and community-based organizations rely on public funding to do their jobs. The public should get clear and consistent reporting from them that shows how well they are doing. The prevention and the containment of violence need to be understood as the paramount goals of these institutions, and they need to be judged and funded accordingly.

The data that follow present an extremely unpleasant picture. Despite recent drops in homicide rates, violent deaths remain commonplace in many parts of the city. And while we don't want to sensationalize this violence or glorify its horrors, we also hope that those reading this report do not become mesmerized by the numbers. Each murder leaves a victim, usually riddled with bullet holes. Each leaves a killer with blood on his or her hands, facing, at best, either a prison term or life as a fugitive. Each leaves grieving families, children without parents and neighbors with another reason to move to a safer neighborhood or to leave the city altogether.

These steps are not, of course, the only ones that need to be taken, but containment, prevention and accountability should be considered the foundation of all steps. Virtually every graph and chart in the data that follows illustrates a different problem. Women need protection from domestic violence. Young children are vulnerable to child abuse.

Particular months of the year and days of the week are more dangerous than others.

Looming over it all are the enormous problems of the drug and weapons trade, each of which so far defies control at either a local or a national level.

Each was one too many.

Each of the many kinds of homicide deserves its own containment and prevention strategy. And each requires the participation of public and private institutions that must be held fully accountable to the public.



The Data

The information and data in this section are based on Philadelphia Police Department homicide reports for the 1,460 murders committed between 1996 and 1999.⁵

The investigation of each homicide that occurs in Philadelphia is placed in the hands of a detective in the Philadelphia Police Department's Homicide Division. The first day of a homicide investigation is critical; evidence must be collected and witnesses interviewed. At the end of the first day of the investigation, the detective assigned to the case completes the Homicide Report, a one-page form containing all the known details of the case, as well as an Activity Report. As the investigation continues, all of the activity on the case, including interview transcripts, reports, evidence and other information, is documented and filed.

The data contained in homicide reports are understandably limited. Some aspects of a case are relatively clear from the outset, such as the age and race of victims and alleged

killers, the weapon of choice and the time of day or location of the crime. Other aspects are harder to pin down, such as the residence of the killer and victim, their relationship at the time of the crime or the motive that led to the killing. Thus, for example, police data can be relied on for an accurate racial profile of victims, but motive data, while representative of the investigating officers' best efforts, requires more careful interpretation.

As noted above, basic data for each homicide was drawn from 1,460 Philadelphia homicide reports. Data concerning alleged murderers was drawn from the smaller pool of 1,037 individuals arrested for 851 homicides (in some cases, more than one person was charged with a given homicide).⁶

Finally, where noted, some data are derived from random samples of 100 victims and 100 alleged murderers.⁷ These samples were used to investigate aspects of a crime that are not normally considered in a Homicide Report, such as the criminal history of a victim or suspect or their status within the justice system.








How to Read the Charts

Our goal with the charts and graphs that follow is to present as much data as possible. Every graph sits alongside its explanatory text. Numbers in italics represent the exact number of victims, alleged murderers, or crimes included in the original police data (1996-1999). Italicized numbers will always refer to such totals. Therefore, from a chart such as "5.8 The Method of Murders," the pie section label "Handgun: 77%; 1,128" indicates that 77 percent of all victims died by handgun, a total of 1,128 people in all.

Unless otherwise indicated, the following colors will be used for race:

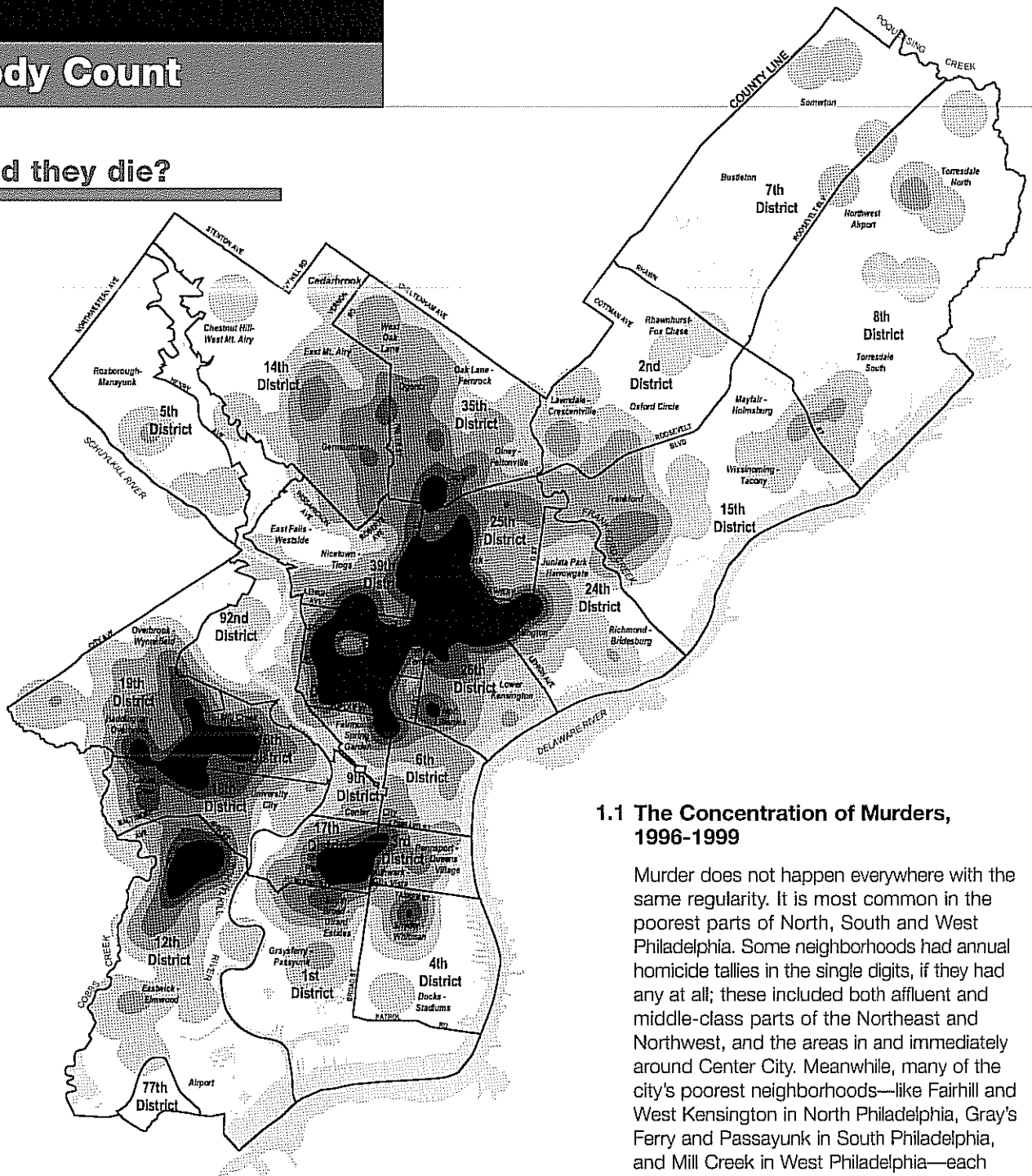
-  African American
-  Hispanic
-  Caucasian
-  Asian American

The same applies to the age groupings:

-  0-5
-  6-11
-  12-17
-  18-24
-  25-34
-  35-44
-  45+

The Body Count

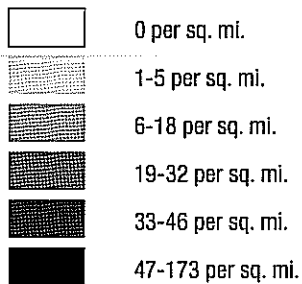
Where did they die?



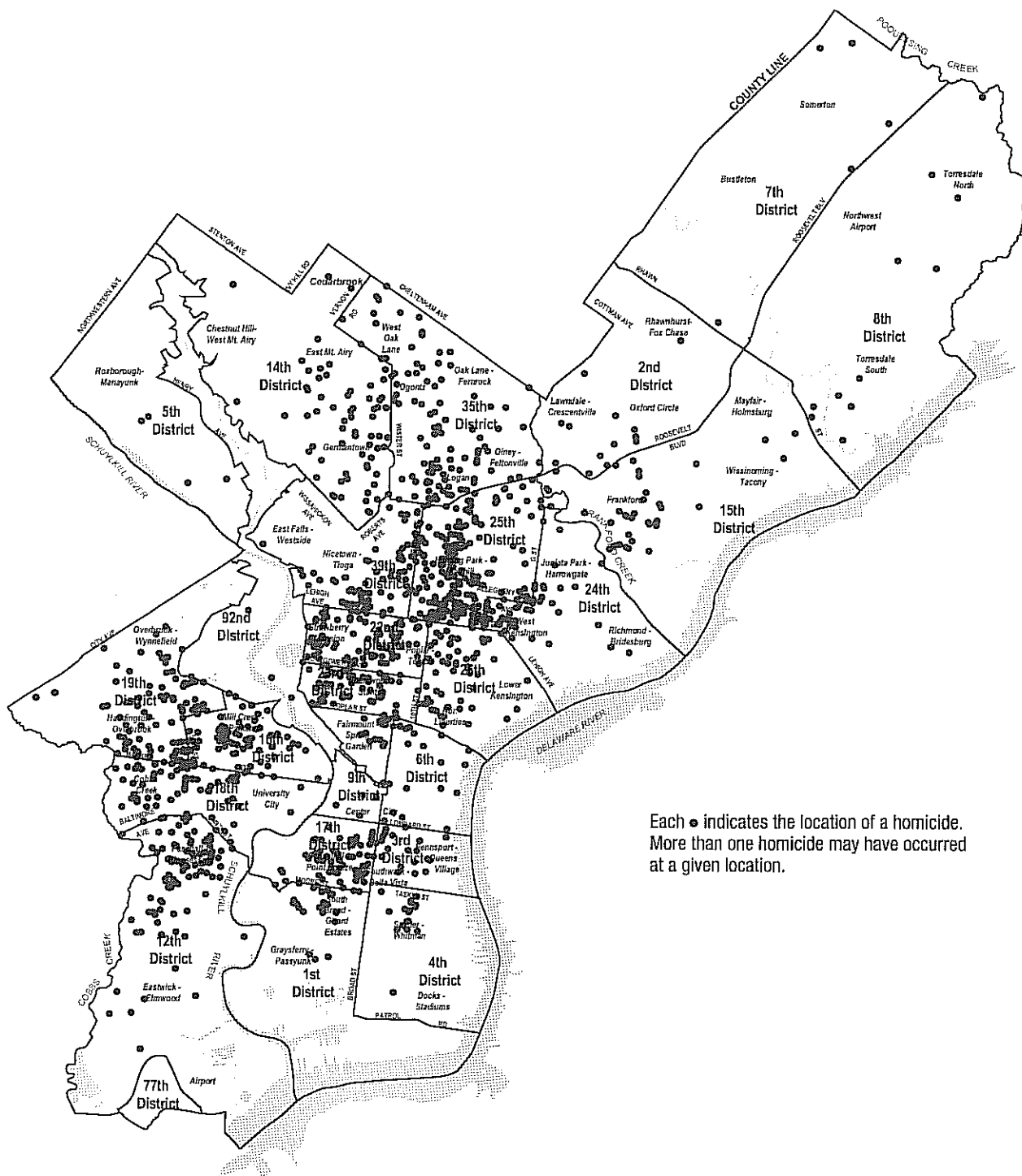
1.1 The Concentration of Murders, 1996-1999

Murder does not happen everywhere with the same regularity. It is most common in the poorest parts of North, South and West Philadelphia. Some neighborhoods had annual homicide tallies in the single digits, if they had any at all; these included both affluent and middle-class parts of the Northeast and Northwest, and the areas in and immediately around Center City. Meanwhile, many of the city's poorest neighborhoods—like Fairhill and West Kensington in North Philadelphia, Gray's Ferry and Passayunk in South Philadelphia, and Mill Creek in West Philadelphia—each witnessed dozens of killings between 1996 and 1999.

Number of Homicides per Square Mile (1996-1999)



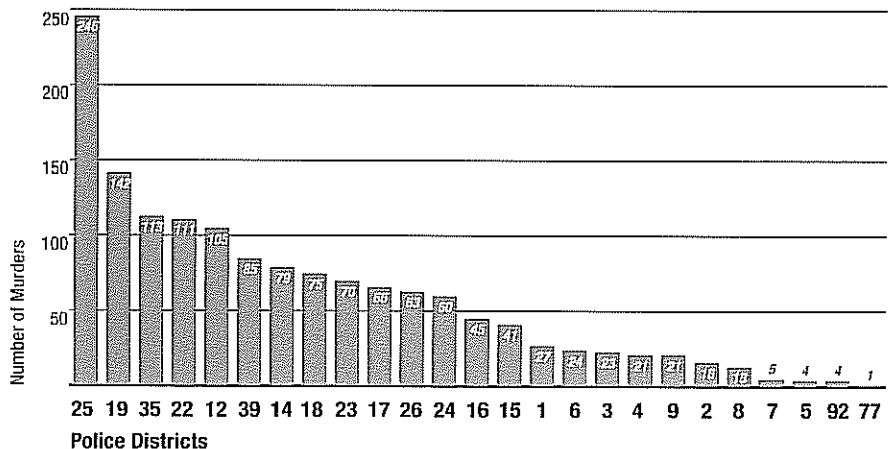
*Cell Size: 50ft
Search Radius: 1/2 mile*

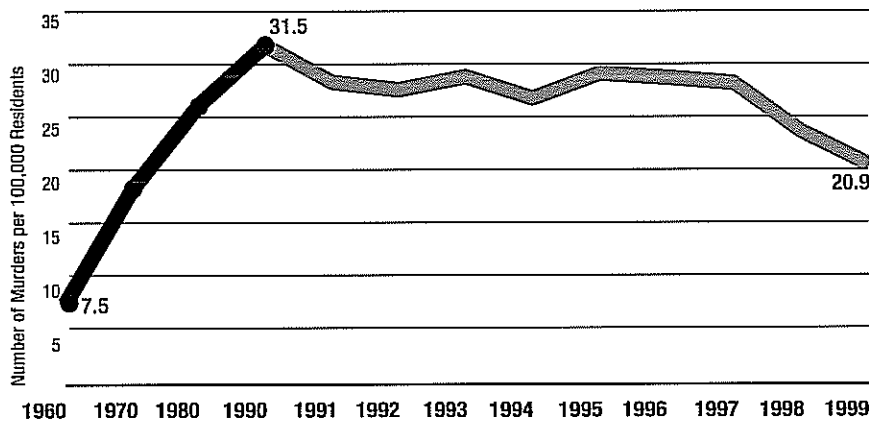
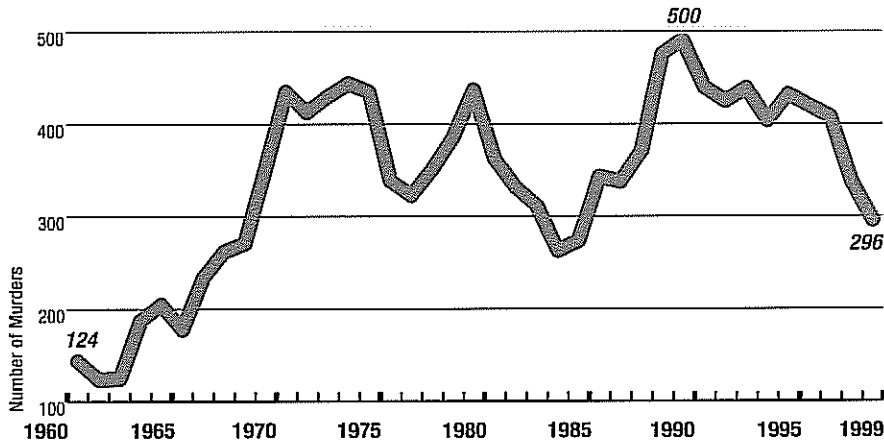


Each ● indicates the location of a homicide. More than one homicide may have occurred at a given location.

1.2 Murders by Police District, 1996-1999

The compartmentalization of homicides is clear. Forty-nine percent of Philadelphia's homicides in 1996-1999 took place in five police districts: the 25th, 19th, 35th, 22nd and 12th. On its own, the 25th police district accounts for one murder out of every six, or 17 percent of all homicides.





Population data source: Pennsylvania State Data Center County Population Estimates for the years 1960-1999.

How many died?

1.3 Murders per Year, 1960-1999

Since 1980, 7,611 people have been murdered within the city limits. Murders peaked in 1990, when 500 were killed; the general trend has been downward in recent years, with 296 killed in 1999, the lowest since the mid-1980s. Nonetheless, 1999's murder rate would have shocked the citizens of the early 1960s, whose city witnessed between 100 and 200 murders per year.

1.4 Murder Rate (per 100,000)

In 1960, one Philadelphian in 13,300 was murdered. In 1970, one in 5,500 was murdered. By 1980, it was one in 3,800, and the rate peaked in 1990, when one Philadelphian out of every 3,200 was murdered. Through the mid-1990s, the rate leveled off with about one murder for every 3,600 residents. Only in the past few years has the murder rate slowed, with one murder for every 4,800 residents in 1999.

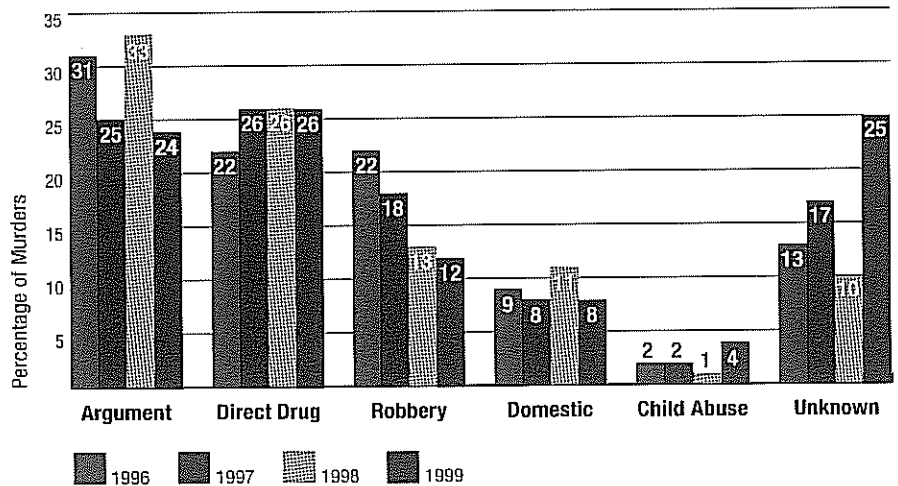
What are the important trends?

The most important trend is that the number of murders is dropping (see chart 1.3). But while the total numbers may be down, recent data show no major changes in the overall profile of the body count. Over the four years of data studied here, P/PV discovered no significant changes in the age, race or gender of murder victims or alleged murderers; no significant changes in the choice of weapon or the location of murders; little change in the motives reported for murder; and no change in the number of murders “cleared”⁸ by the police.

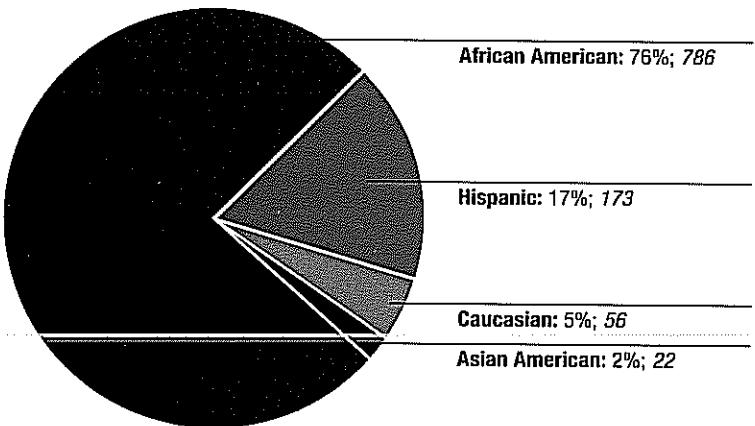
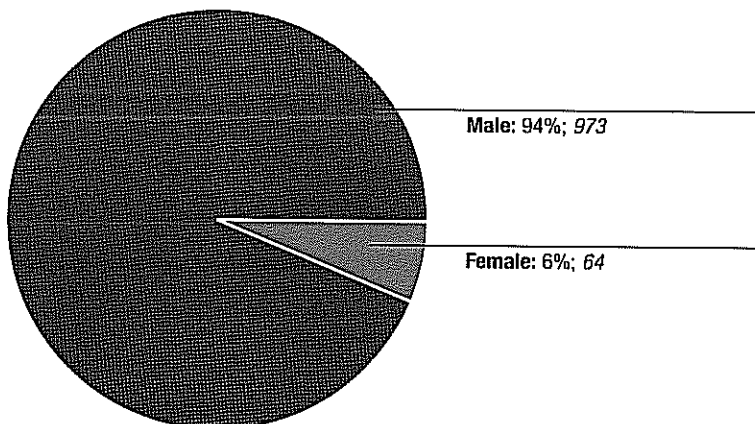
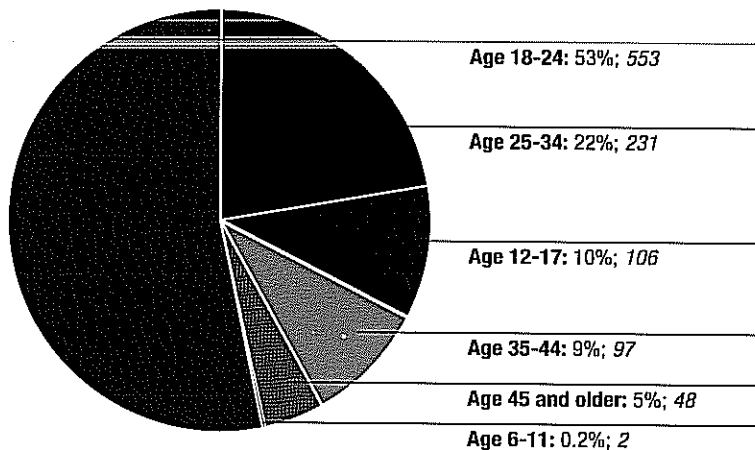
It appears that the overall decline in homicides does not reflect significant success at reducing any particular kind of homicide.

1.5 Six Key Murder Motives, 1996-1999

This chart shows the changes in six different reported kinds of murders: arguments, domestic homicides, robbery-related homicides, child-abuse killings, drug-related murders and unknown motives. Only robbery-related murders have significantly dropped as a percentage of the total, from almost one in four to about one in eight. Drug-related killings have consistently made up a quarter of the total. Arguments account for between a quarter and a third. Domestic killings account for approximately one-tenth. For more details on motives, see Part Five.



The Alleged Murderers



Who were the killers?

2.1 The Age of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

The alleged murderers were overwhelmingly young adults. Of the 1,037 people arrested for homicides committed between 1996 and 1999, over half—53 percent—were young adults aged 18 to 24.⁹ Adults aged 25 to 34 made up 22 percent of the total and young people aged 12 to 17 comprised 10 percent. There were even fewer alleged murderers in the older age groups.

2.2 The Gender of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

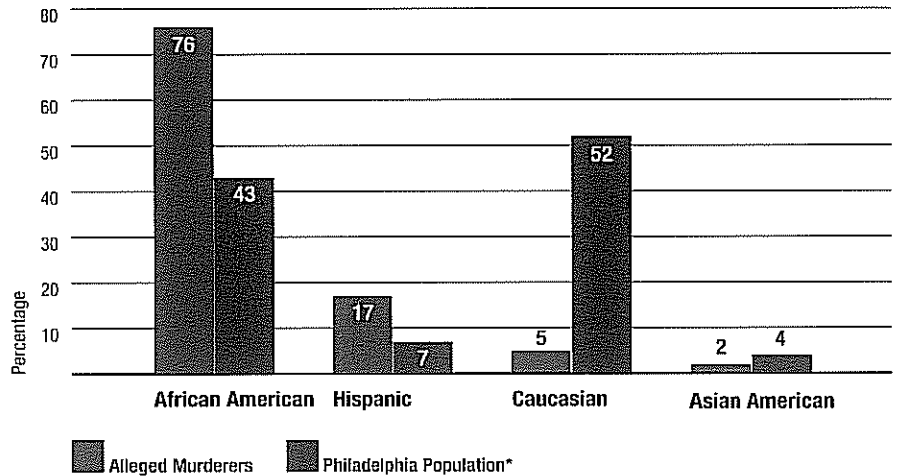
Alleged murderers in Philadelphia were virtually all men. Ninety-four percent (973) of those charged for murders committed from 1996 to 1999 were male.

2.3 The Race of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

Three out of four alleged murderers—76 percent—were African American, 17 percent were Hispanic, 5 percent were Caucasian and 2 percent were Asian American.

2.4 Racial Profile: The City versus Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

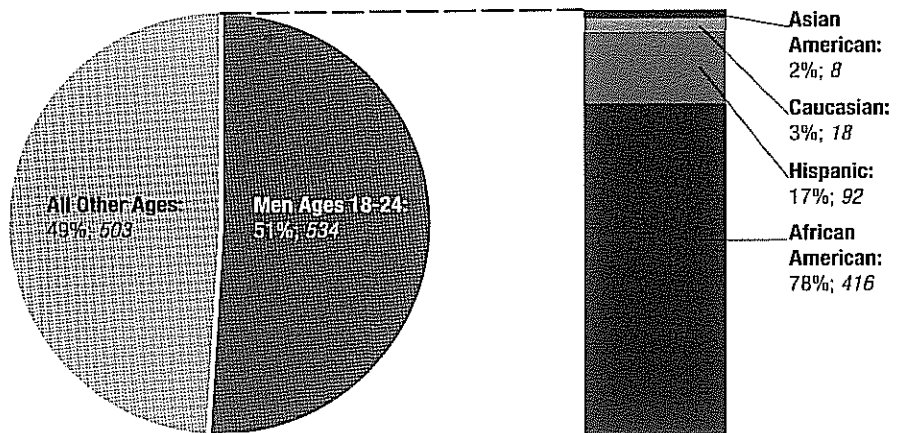
The racial makeup of the city's alleged murderers does not match the city's overall racial makeup. African Americans make up less than half the city's population but represented over three-quarters of its alleged murderers between 1996 and 1999. Caucasians, on the other hand, make up over half the city's population and represented only 5 percent of its alleged murderers. And while 7 percent of the city's population is Hispanic, 17 percent of its alleged murderers between 1996 and 1999 were Hispanic.

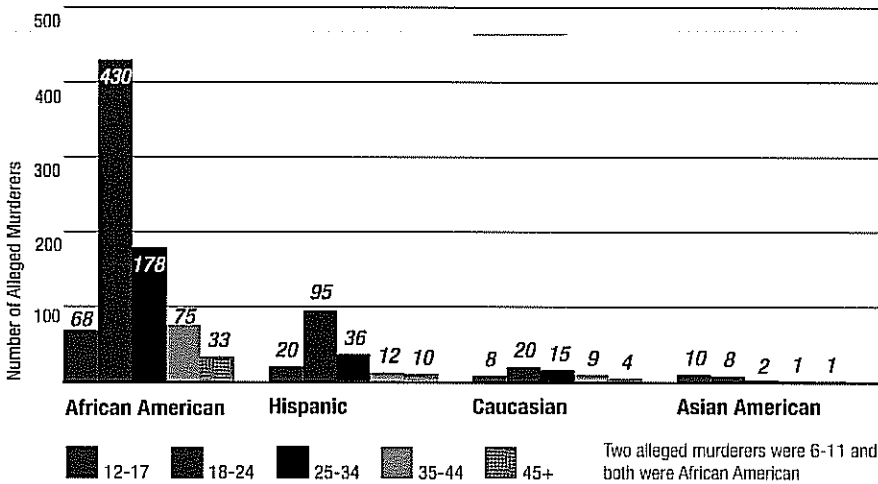


* Philadelphia race estimates are from the U.S. Census Bureau (1998 county population estimates ranked by race and Hispanic origin). They total over 100 percent because people of African-American, Caucasian or other race can also classify their ethnicity as Hispanic. In the Philadelphia homicide offenders dataset, people of Hispanic origin are not designated multiple classifications.

2.5 Alleged Murderers: Males 18 to 24 (Subdivided by Race) versus All Others, 1996-1999

Just over half of all alleged murderers in the city were young men aged 18 to 24. Of these young men, 78 percent were African American. This means that of all alleged murderers in the city, 40 percent were African-American men between the ages of 18 and 24.

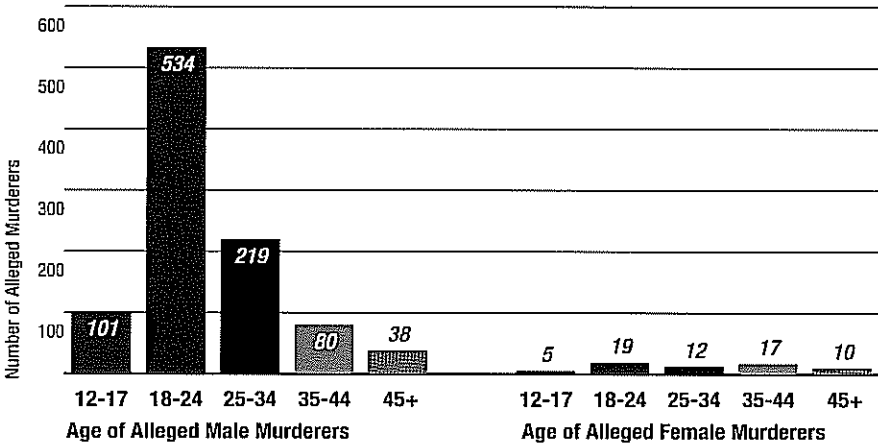




2.6 The Age and Race of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

In virtually all racial groups, most homicide offenders are young adults. The number of alleged murderers is highest among 18- to 24-year-olds in the African-American, Hispanic and Caucasian communities, with relatively few juvenile and older offenders.

In each racial group, fewer murders were committed by juveniles aged 12 to 17, ranging from 14 percent of all Caucasians to 9 percent of all African Americans who were charged with murder. While the exception would appear to be among Asian-American alleged murderers, 46 percent of whom were juveniles,¹⁰ it is important to remember that a relatively small number of Asian Americans—22 in all—were charged with murders committed in Philadelphia from 1996 to 1999.



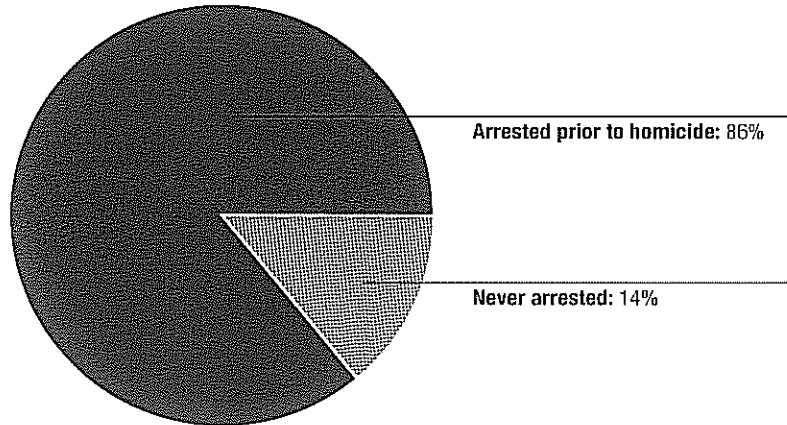
2.7 The Age and Gender of Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

Unlike men, women do not seem to be more likely to murder at a young age.

What were their criminal backgrounds?

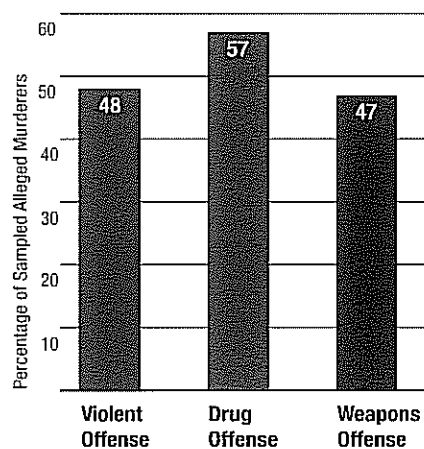
2.8 Criminal Histories among a Random Sample of 25th Police District Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

To determine the criminal background of alleged murderers, P/PV randomly selected 100 individuals arrested for homicides that occurred from 1996 to 1999 in the 25th police district. The tale their "rap sheets" tell is clear: these alleged murderers were rarely new to the criminal justice system. Almost 9 out of 10 had been previously arrested. Only 14 percent had never been arrested.



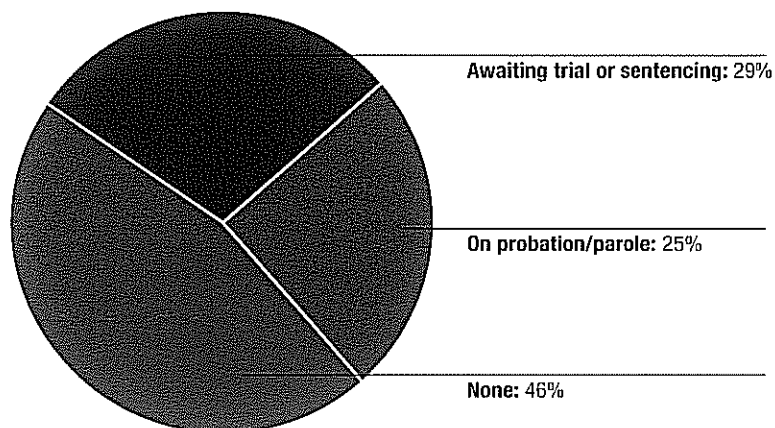
2.9 Criminal History Breakdown among a Random Sample of 25th Police District Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

Of the alleged murderers sampled, over half had been arrested for drug offenses. Almost half had been arrested for violent crimes or weapons charges. On average, those alleged murderers with prior records had been arrested 4.9 times. This suggests that murder among this group is not an isolated act but the culminating event in a pattern of breaking the law.

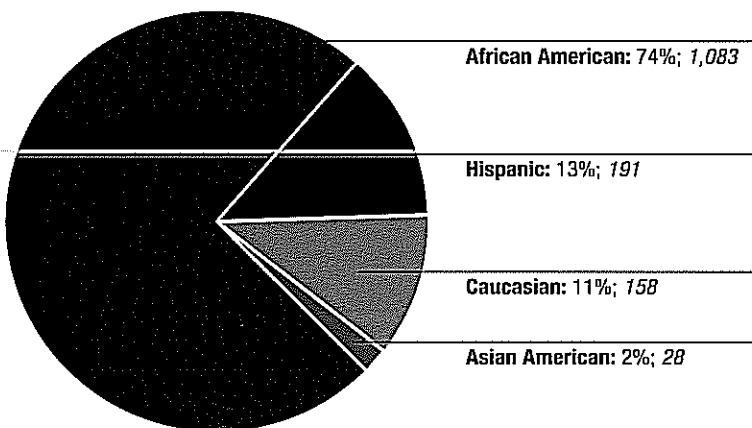
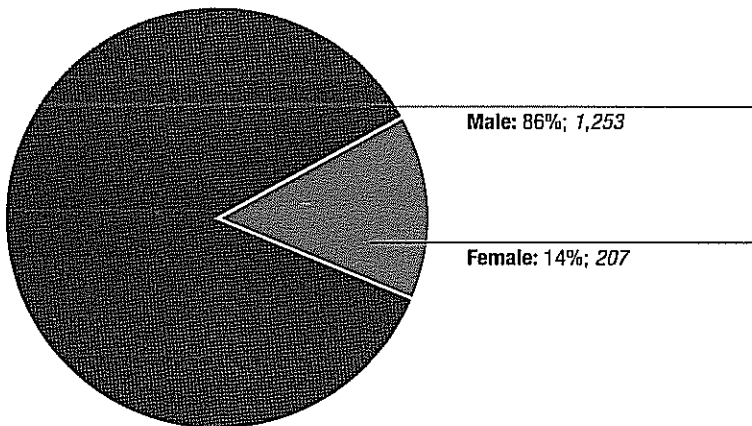
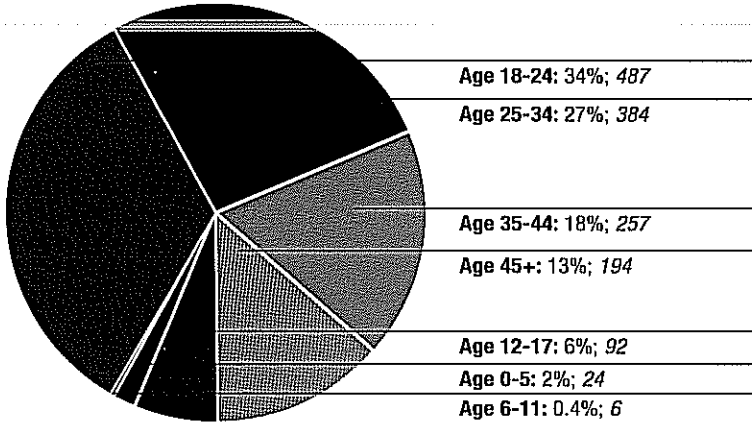


2.10 Parole, Probation and Trial Status among a Random Sample of 25th Police District Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

In this sample, over half of alleged murderers were already actively engaged with the justice system at the time of the murder. Twenty-five percent of the alleged murderers sampled were on probation or parole at the time that they committed a murder. More than a quarter (29%) were awaiting trial or sentencing for another criminal offense. This means that at the time that they committed a murder, 54 percent of a randomly selected group of alleged murderers were either on probation, on parole, awaiting trial or awaiting sentencing.



The Murder Victims



Age not available for 16 victims.

Who were the victims?

3.1 The Age of Victims, 1996-1999

From 1996 to 1999, one out of every three Philadelphia murder victims was 18 to 24 years old (34%)—487 victims in total.¹¹ The next largest group was the 25- to 34-year-olds, 384 of whom were killed in the same period (27%). Juveniles aged 12 to 17 were victims in 6 percent of, or 92, homicides.¹² There were 24 newborn through 5-year-olds and six 6- to 11-year-old victims of murder. At the other end of the age continuum, 13 percent of all homicide victims were 45 or older (194).

3.2 The Gender of Victims, 1996-1999

Males were murdered far more often than females. More than four out of five victims were men (1,253 in total), while 14 percent were women (207 victims). At the youngest ages—newborn through age 11—about equal numbers of males and females were murdered. Once they reach the teen years, however, many more males are murder victims.

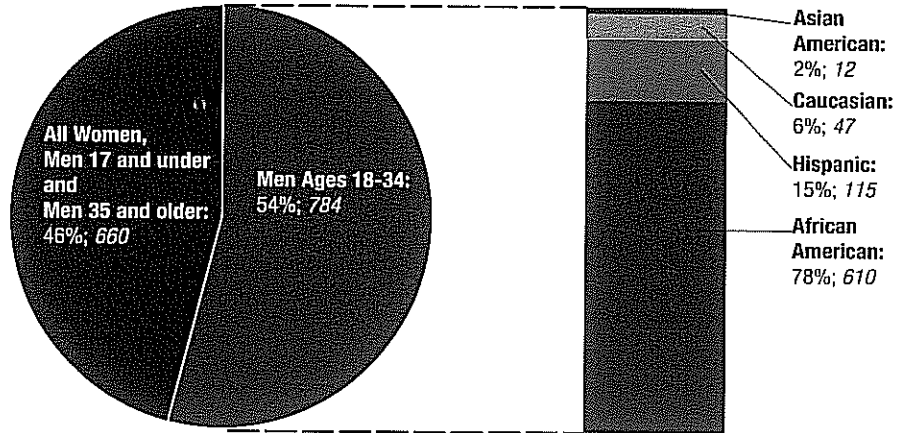
There were also differences in the pattern of homicides among females of different racial backgrounds. Among Caucasians and Asian Americans, females made up about a quarter of 1996-1999 homicide victims, but among African Americans and Hispanics, females represented 12 and 13 percent of the total, respectively.

3.3 The Race of Victims, 1996-1999

As was the case with alleged murderers, most victims were African Americans. Three out of four murder victims (74%) from 1996 to 1999 were African Americans. Hispanics accounted for 13 percent of all murder victims, Caucasians for 11 percent and Asian Americans for 2 percent.

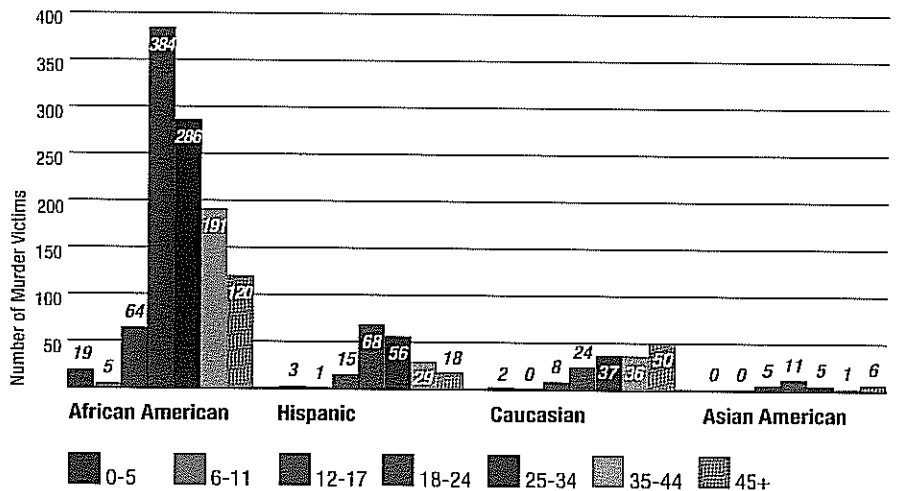
3.4 Victims: Men Aged 18 to 34 (Subdivided by Race) versus All Others, 1996-1999

It is clear that young men are by far the most likely to die. Men aged 18 to 34 made up over one half of the total (54%). Of those young men, most—78 percent—are African American. This means that out of all the murder victims in the city, 42 percent are African American men aged 18 to 34.



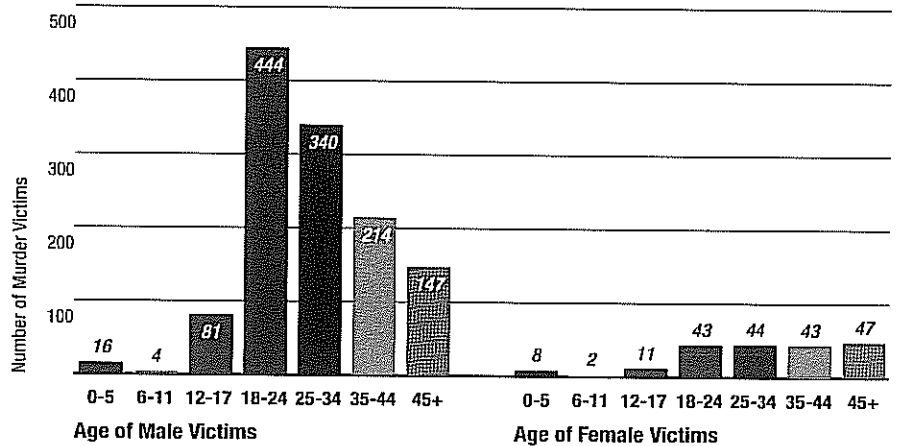
3.5 Age and Race of Murder Victims, 1996-1999

As we have seen, homicides were most common among 18- to 24-year-olds, but this was not true for victims of all races. The number of Caucasian victims increased steadily after age 12, unlike the pattern for all other racial groups, which peaked among 18- to 24-year-olds.

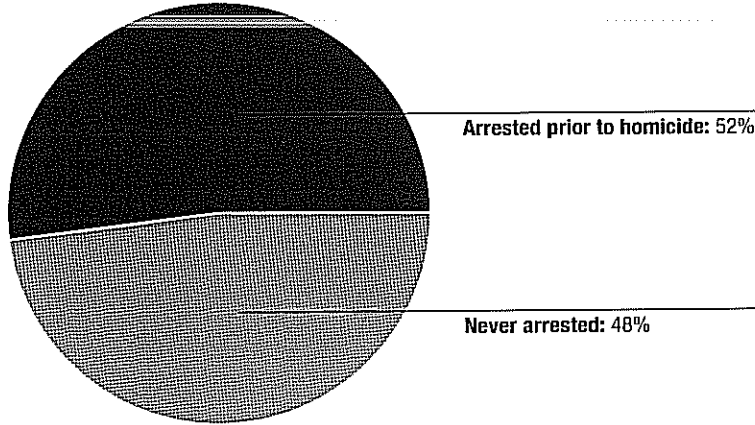


3.6 Age and Gender of Murder Victims, 1996-1999

Murders of female victims follow a different pattern than males. While the number of male homicide victims peaked in young adulthood and then steadily decreased, the number of female homicide victims remained relatively stable after age 18.

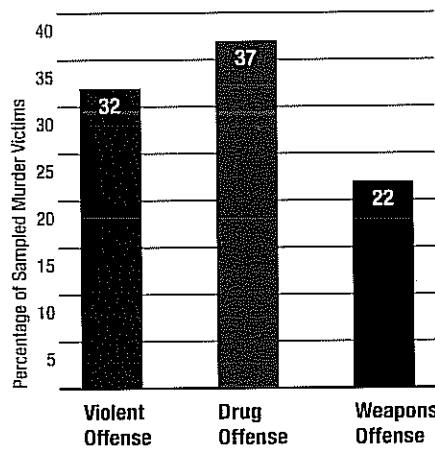


What were their criminal backgrounds?



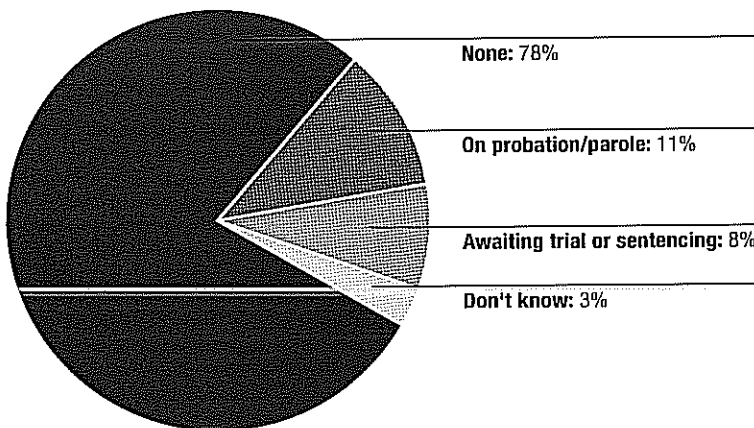
3.7 Criminal Histories for a Random Sample of 25th Police District Victims, 1996-1999

In order to learn more about murder victims in Philadelphia, we looked at the criminal and court histories of 100 randomly selected individuals murdered from 1996 to 1999 in the 25th police district, the highest-crime police district in Philadelphia. More than half (52%) of these murder victims had previous criminal histories.



3.8 Criminal History Breakdown for a Random Sample of 25th Police District Victims, 1996-1999

Thirty-two percent of victims had a previous criminal history characterized by violent crimes and 22 percent had weapons charges. Thirty-seven percent of homicide victims had previous drug arrests, such as possession with intent to distribute (sell) illegal drugs.¹³



3.9 Probation, Parole and Trial Status for a Random Sample of 25th Police District Victims, 1996-1999

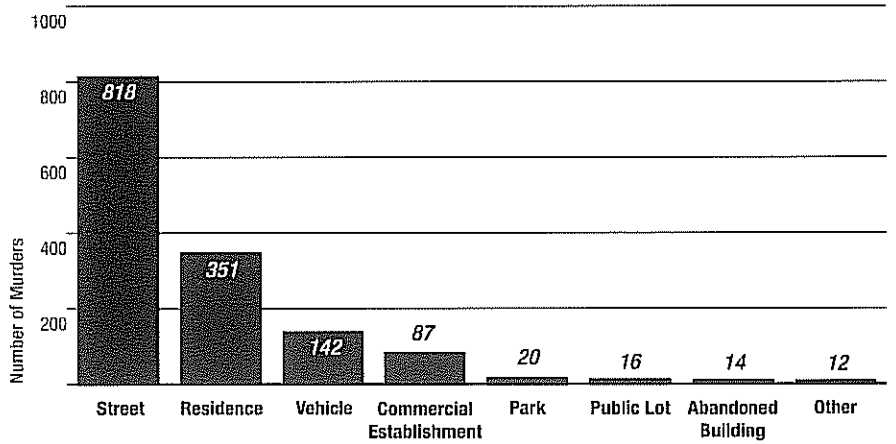
A random sample of 100 murder victims from the 25th police district showed that almost one in five was either on probation or parole, or awaiting trial or sentencing. Most, 78 percent, were not actively involved in the criminal justice system at the time they were murdered.

The Scene of the Crime

Where?

4.1 The Locations of Murders, 1996-1999

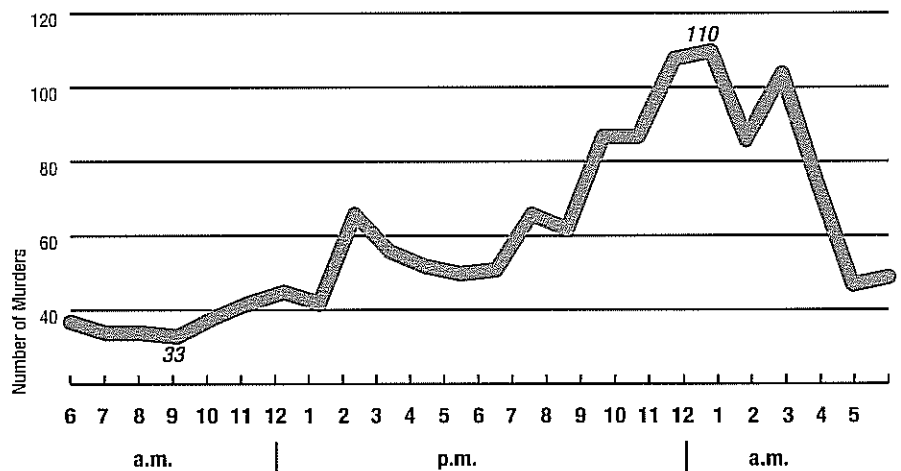
Most murders happen on the street. Of the 1,460 homicides covered here, 818 (56%) were classified "highway," indicating that the body was found out on the streets of the city. By comparison, the next largest group took place in homes, accounting for a quarter of the total. Six percent took place in commercial establishments, and 10 percent in vehicles.



When?

4.2 When Murders Occur: Time of Day, 1996-1999

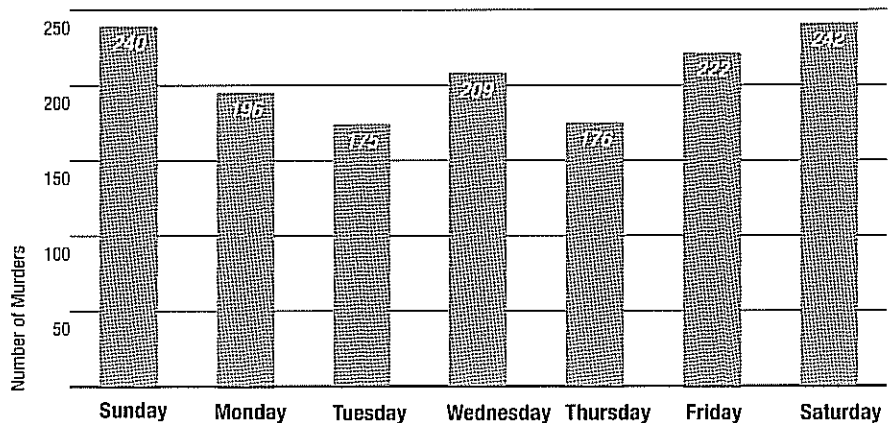
Homicides typically occur late at night. In Philadelphia, homicides increased throughout the day and peaked between 11:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.¹⁴

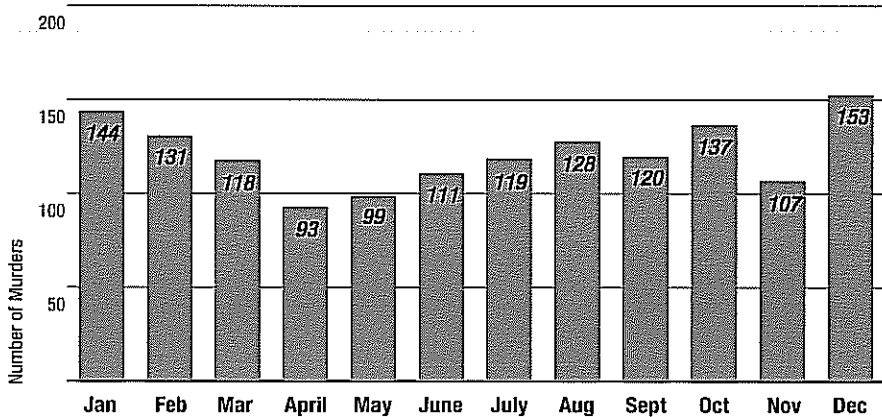


Times are rounded to the nearest hour.

4.3 When Murders Occur: Day of Week, 1996-1999

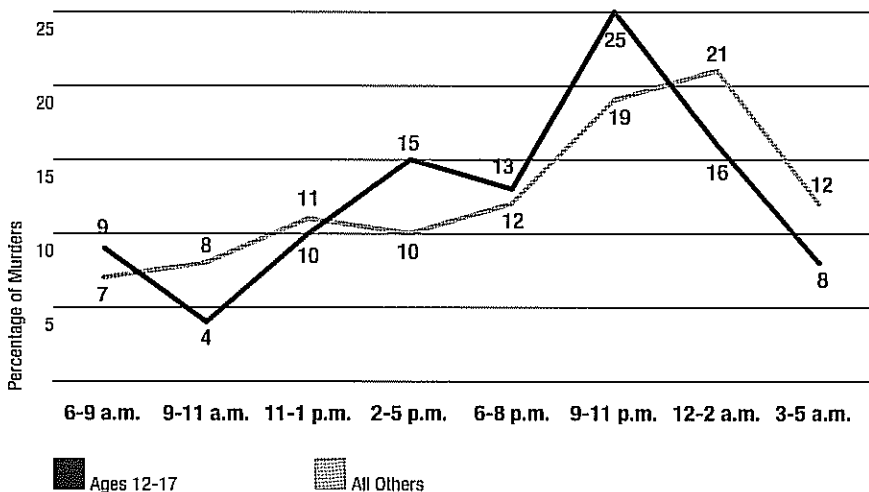
Murders were more common on weekends. On this chart, Sundays appear to be just as dangerous as Fridays and Saturdays, but it is important to remember that any murder occurring in the early morning hours following midnight on Saturday gets recorded as a Sunday murder. An analysis of murder times showed that Sunday after 5:30 a.m. is not much more dangerous than an ordinary weekday.





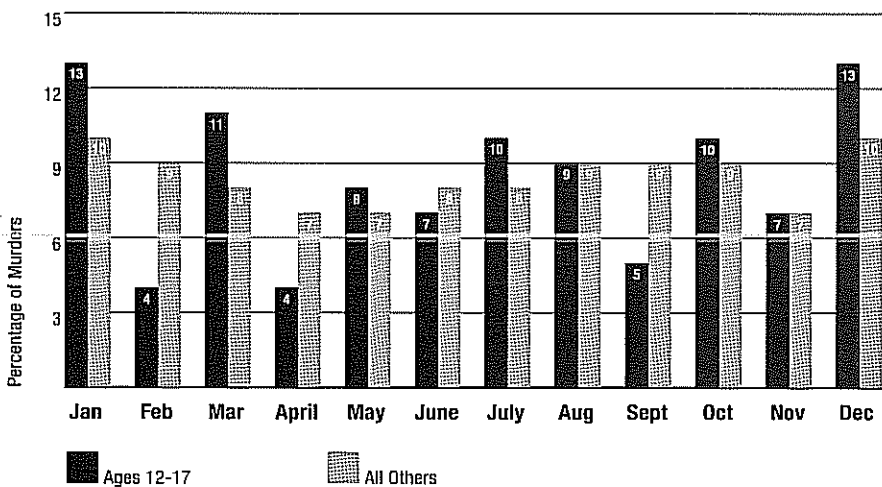
4.4 When Murders Occur: Month of Year, 1996-1999

Murders in Philadelphia were most frequent in December and January. Over the four years of this study, those months averaged 38 and 36 murders per month, respectively. April and May saw the fewest murders, averaging 23 and 25 per month, respectively.



4.5 Times of Youth Murders versus All Others, 1996-1999

While other studies have demonstrated a significant increase in homicides of teens during after-school hours, our data reveal that the overall pattern for school-aged teen homicide victims in Philadelphia closely mirrored that of other murder victims. The highest number of 12- to 17-year-old victims were killed during the late night hours.



4.6 Months of Youth Murders versus All Others, 1996-1999

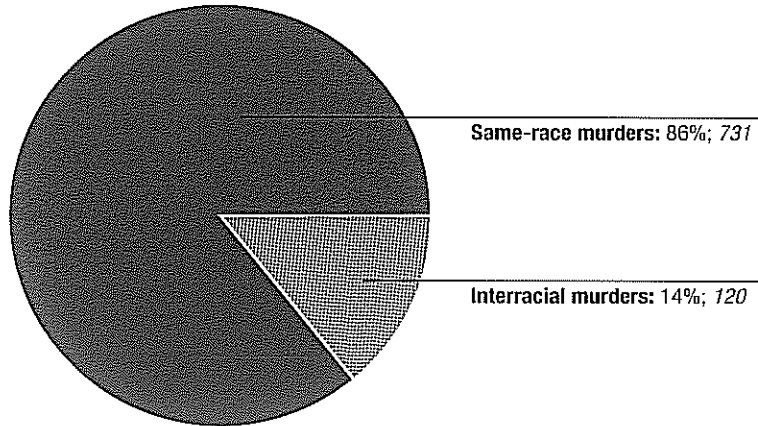
In addition, homicides among 12- to 17-year olds were no more common during the often-supervised summer months than during the school year.

The Crime Itself

Who killed whom?

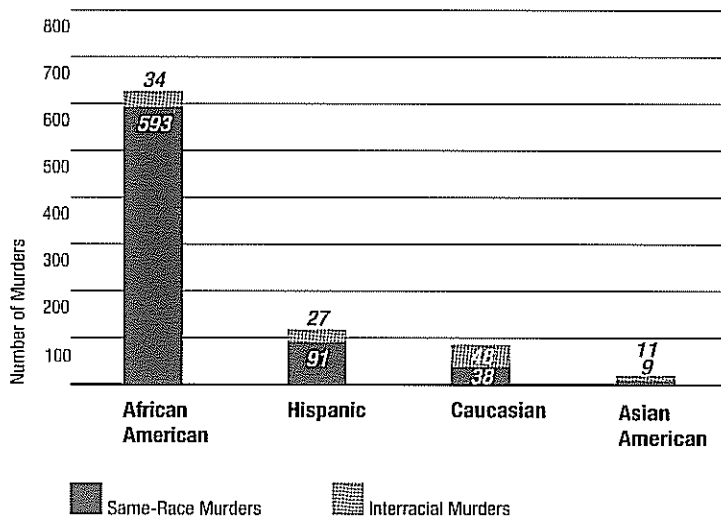
5.1 Same-Race Murders versus Interracial Murders, 1996-1999

The fact that the profiles of alleged murderers and victims were so similar suggests that people kill people like themselves, and the statistical evidence supports that. The overwhelming majority of alleged murderers and victims in Philadelphia were of the same race. Eighty-six percent of killers in Philadelphia from 1996 through 1999 were the same race as their victims.¹⁵

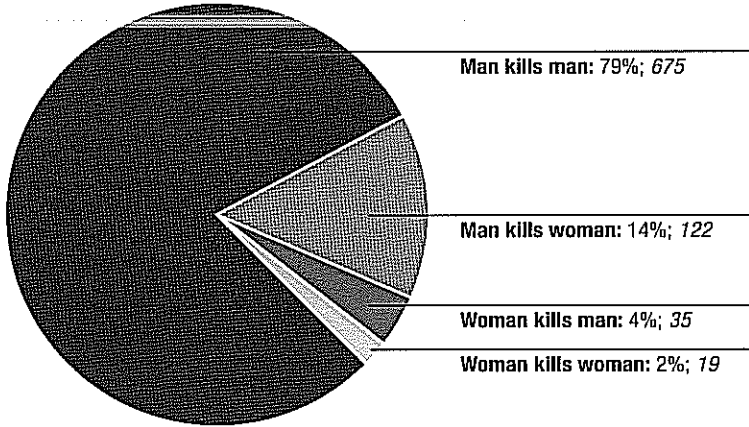


5.2 Race: Victims and Their Alleged Murderers, 1996-1999

However, this pattern was not consistent across all racial groups. Almost all African-American murder victims (95%) were killed by another African American. The percentage of Hispanics killed by other Hispanics was lower, 77 percent, but still represented a majority. Caucasians and Asian Americans, on the other hand, were both just as likely to be murdered by an individual of another race as by one of their own. Forty-eight percent of Asian Americans were killed by another Asian American, and 44 percent of Caucasians were killed by another Caucasian.

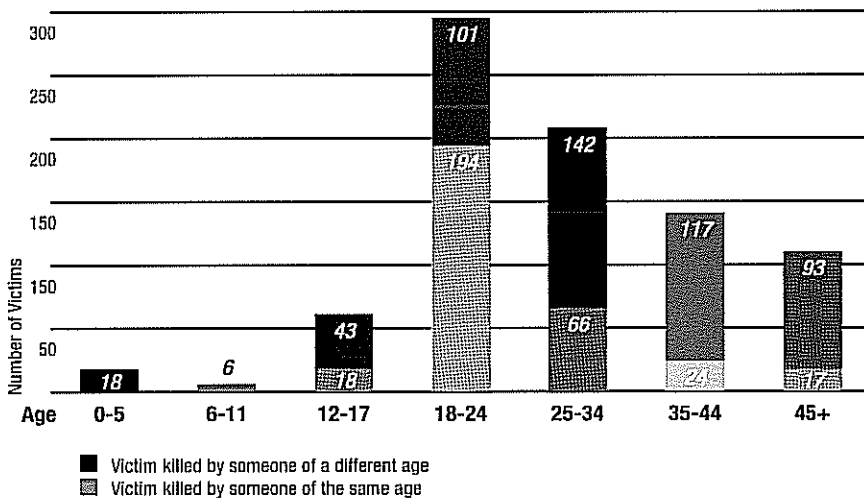


Seen another way, the interracial killing data show the disproportionate extent to which murder in Philadelphia is concentrated among African Americans. Out of the 851 murders for which complete data were available, 70 percent involved African Americans allegedly killing other African Americans. Less than 5 percent involved Caucasians killing other Caucasians.



5.3 Gender of Alleged Murderer versus Gender of Victim, 1996-1999

Male and female victims alike were usually killed by men. Almost 80 percent of all murders in Philadelphia from 1996 through 1999 were male-on-male. In 14 percent of homicides, a man killed a woman. Women killed relatively few people, but most of them were men—over four years, women killed 35 men and 19 women.



5.4 Age of Victim versus Age of Alleged Murderer, 1996-1999

While people were usually killed by men of their same race, they were not necessarily killed by someone their own age. Most were killed by someone 18 to 24 years old. In fact, 18- to 24-year-old victims were the only ones (68%) who were more likely to be killed by someone in the same age group.

In 12 cases, age was not available.

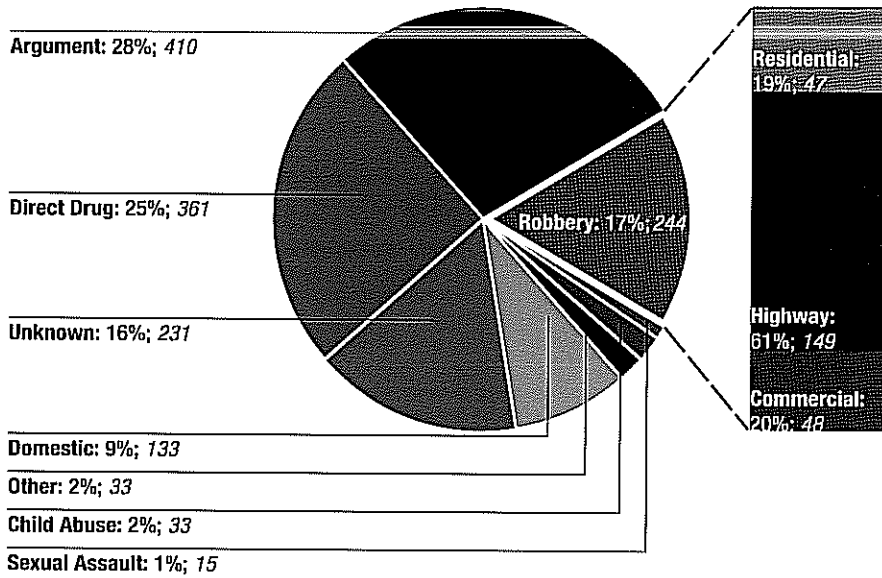
Why?

Data on motives must be interpreted cautiously. Homicide cases are assigned a motive during the course of the investigation, and it may be updated as new information is gathered. But the interpretation of the motive is subjective, and detectives do not have to be 100-percent certain before making a motive assignment.

The Philadelphia Police Department uses nine categories to classify homicide motives: direct drug; argument; sexual, domestic or child abuse; highway, residential or commercial robbery; or other. These categories are not mutually exclusive, but only one motive is assigned to a murder. For instance, a husband could beat his wife to death during an argument, and a homicide detective must decide whether to assign the motive “argument” or “domestic abuse.” If the argument was about drugs, or drugs played a role, the homicide could be classified as “direct drug”; if drugs played a secondary role, a secondary motive of “indirect drug” can be added to the primary motive.

Examples of motives are as follows:

<i>Motive</i>	<i>Example</i>
Direct drug	Drug dealer shoots another drug dealer over the use of a corner.
Argument	Neighbors argue and one shoots the other.
Domestic	Man comes to a house and shoots former girlfriend and her children.
Highway robbery	A person is car-jacked and shot to death.
Residential robbery	A robber breaks into a person's home with the intent to steal property and kills the homeowner.
Commercial robbery	An armed gunman robs a convenience store and shoots store employee.
Sexual assault	A man rapes and kills a woman.
Child abuse	A mother beats her 1-year-old daughter to death.
Other	A gang-related murder that is not directly drug related; a witness is murdered.
Indirect drug (secondary motive)	“Indirect drug” is a secondary motive, assigned to indicate that drugs contributed to the primary motive, e.g., a man kills his wife (“domestic”) while under the influence of drugs. Alcohol is not considered a “drug” under this classification.



245 homicides in which the motive was not direct drug, were indirectly related to drugs.

5.5 The Motives Behind Murders, 1996-1999

The most common motive reported for homicides in Philadelphia from 1996 to 1999, was "argument." Over a quarter (28%) of all homicides resulted from an argument that police determined was not directly drug related. Another quarter (25%) were "direct drug" homicides, such as those committed in a war over a drug corner or in a conflict over selling drugs. About a sixth of all murders (17%) occurred during a robbery, usually on the street. In another sixth (16%) of all cases, the motive remains "unknown." The remainder of homicides are divided among domestic killings (almost a tenth of the total) and child abuse, sexual assaults and "other" motives (about 5% combined).

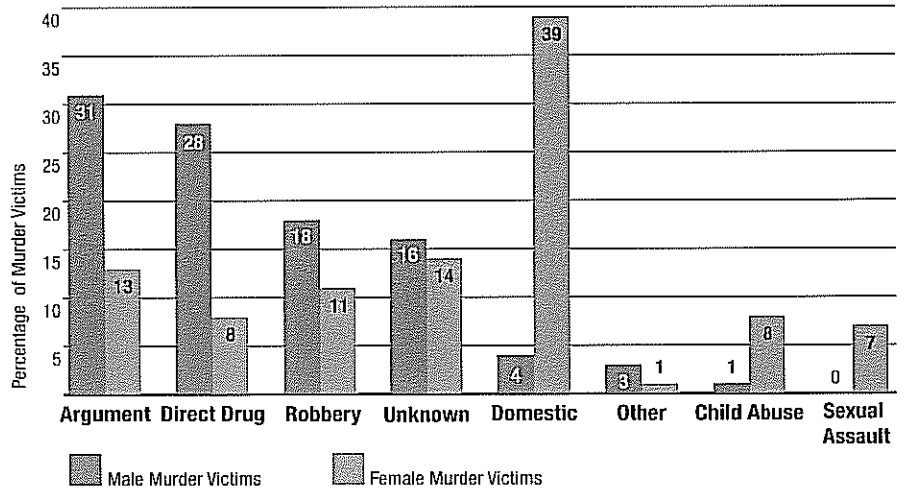
In addition, police identify a secondary motive, called "indirect drug," to identify crimes in which drugs were involved but were not the primary motive (e.g., primary motive was an argument, but the participants were impaired by drugs or drugs were present at the crime scene, so police report indirect drug as a secondary motive). In some 245 cases, or 17 percent of the total, "indirect drug" was added to the main motive. Alcohol-related crimes are not given the "indirect drug" classification.

Thus, combining direct and indirect drug murders, 42 percent of homicides had a known drug connection.

5.6 Motives for Killing Men Versus Motives for Killing Women, 1996-1999

Homicide motives differed depending on the gender of the victim. Of the 207 women who were killed, 39 percent died as a result of a domestic situation or disagreement, including spousal abuse, making this the number-one motive for killing women. Thirteen percent of female murder victims were murdered as a result of a non-domestic argument, and 7 percent were killed as a result of a sexual assault. In 14 percent of the cases the motive was unknown.

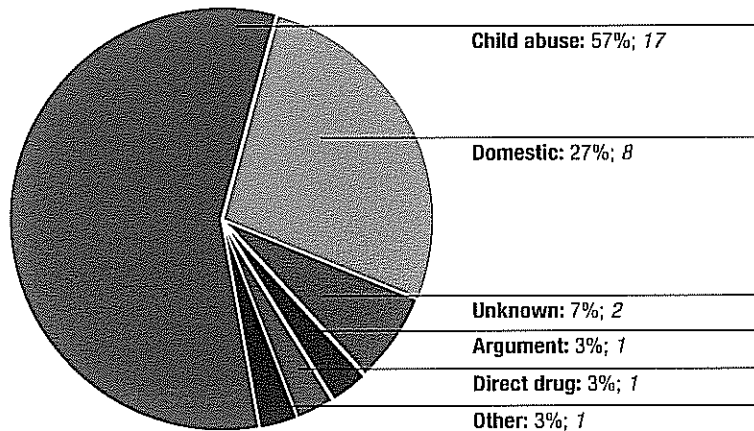
For men, the number-one motive for murder was an argument (31%), followed closely by homicides that were directly linked to drugs or the drug trade (28%). Eighteen percent of men were killed as a result of a robbery, most of which were classified "highway," in which the body was found on the street, as opposed to "commercial" robberies, in which the crime was committed in a store or business. Four percent of all male victims were murdered as a result of a domestic situation or disagreement. In 16 percent of murders with male victims, the motive was unknown.



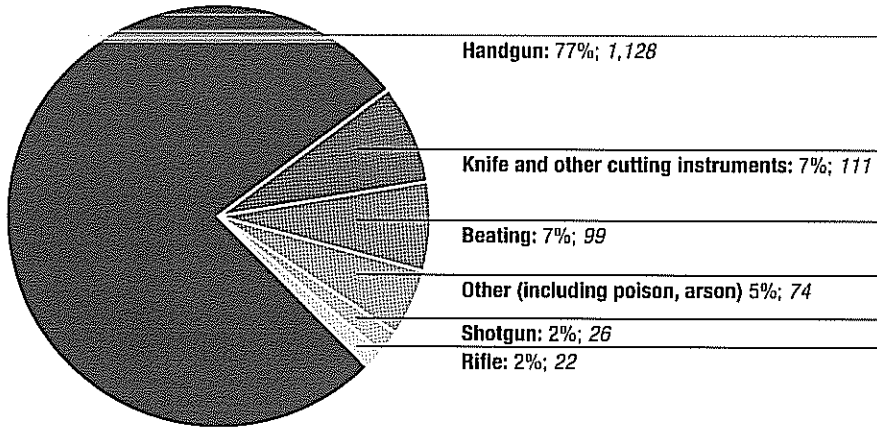
5.7 Motives for Youth Murders, 1996-1999

Children die for different reasons than adults. Of the 30 children under 12 who were killed between 1996 and 1999, 25 (83%) died either through child abuse (17 deaths) or domestic violence in which the child was not the primary target (8 deaths).¹⁶

For people older than 12, however, P/PV's analysis found that the motives for death are relatively consistent regardless of age. Among teens, young adults and older adults, the motives remained fairly constant: approximately a quarter were direct-drug deaths; another quarter or more sprang from arguments; close to 10 percent were domestic deaths. These numbers fluctuate somewhat among the age groups but not widely.



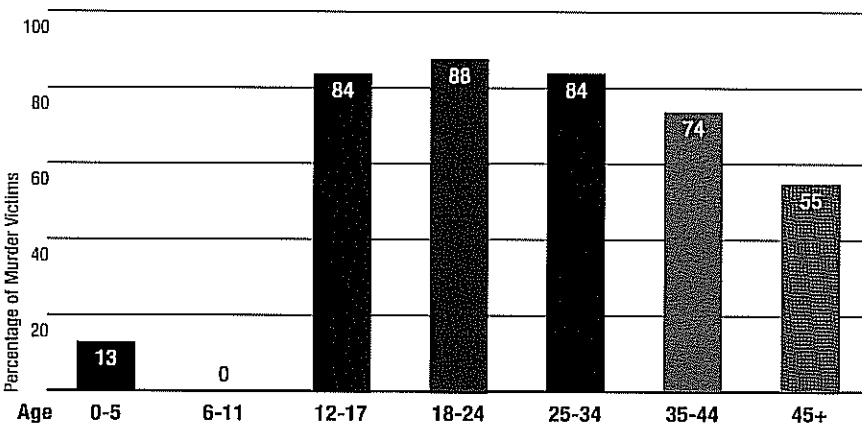
How did victims die?



5.8 The Method of Murders, 1996-1999

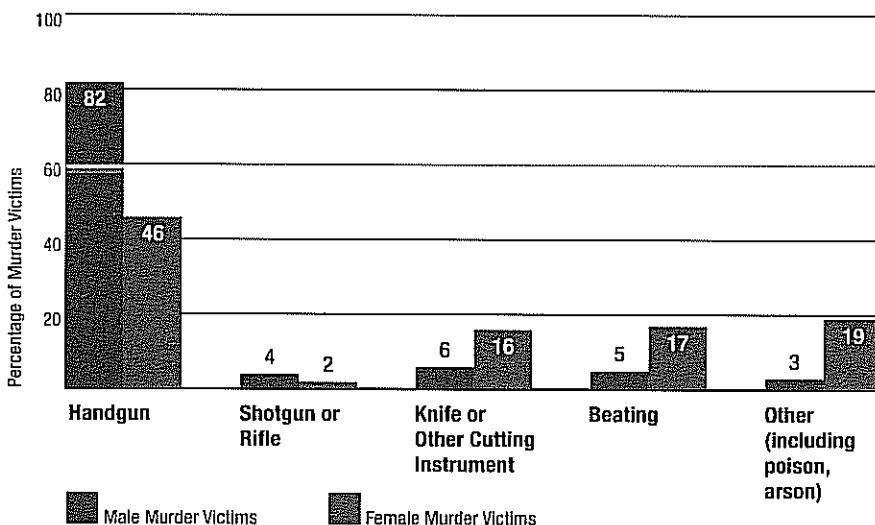
Eighty percent of Philadelphia homicide victims were shot to death, with the majority killed by handguns. From 1996 to 1999, 77 percent of all homicide victims in Philadelphia were killed with handguns, a total of 1,128 deaths. By comparison, 22 and 26 people were shot to death with rifles and shotguns, respectively.

Homicide by other means, including beating, knife or cutting instrument, poison and arson accounted for the remaining 20 percent of homicides in Philadelphia. Beating was a common means of homicide in the youngest years, with 43 percent of children 5 years old and under murdered by beating. Beating becomes less common among teens and adults and then surges in older adults; 20 percent of adult homicide victims aged 45 or older were beaten to death.



5.9 Percentage of Murder Victims Killed with Handguns, by Age, 1996-1999

Young adults were at the greatest risk of being killed with a handgun. Fully 88 percent of 18- to 24-year-old victims were shot to death, compared with 55 percent of victims 45 and older, and 13 percent of children five and under.

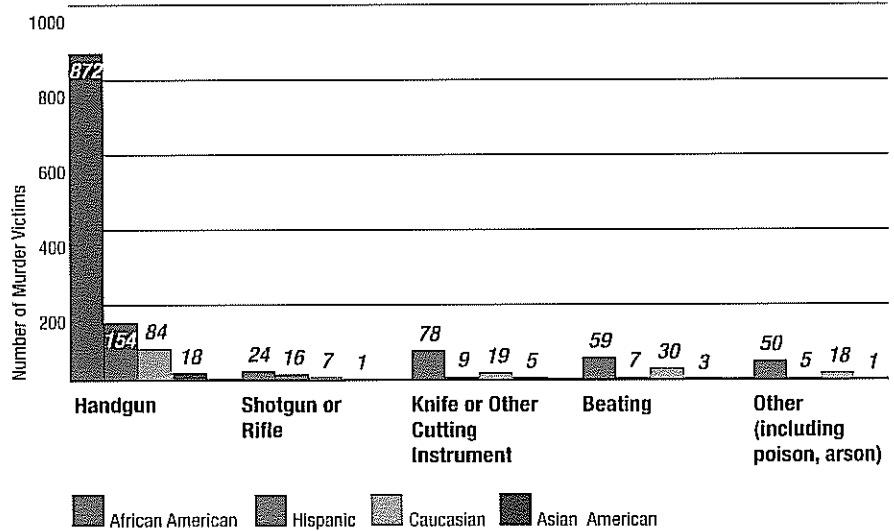


5.10 Methods Used to Kill Female and Male Murder Victims, 1996-1999

Women were less likely than men to be killed by a handgun. In contrast to male murder victims who were killed by handguns in 82 percent of cases, 46 percent of female victims were shot to death by a handgun. Women were much more likely than men to be killed by knife (16% of female victims versus 6% of male victims), beating (17% versus 5%) and other means, including poison and arson (19% versus 3%).

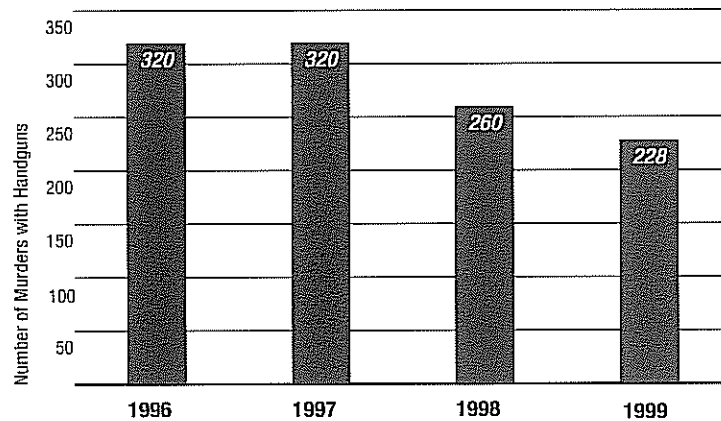
5.11 The Methods for Different Races, 1996-1999

As a percentage of the whole, handgun deaths skyrocketed among African Americans and Hispanics. Almost 60 percent of all Philadelphia homicides involved African Americans killed with handguns. Another 10 percent of the total were Hispanics killed by handguns. Six percent of all victims were Caucasians killed with handguns. The remaining 24 percent of homicides involved people of a variety of races dying by a variety of methods.



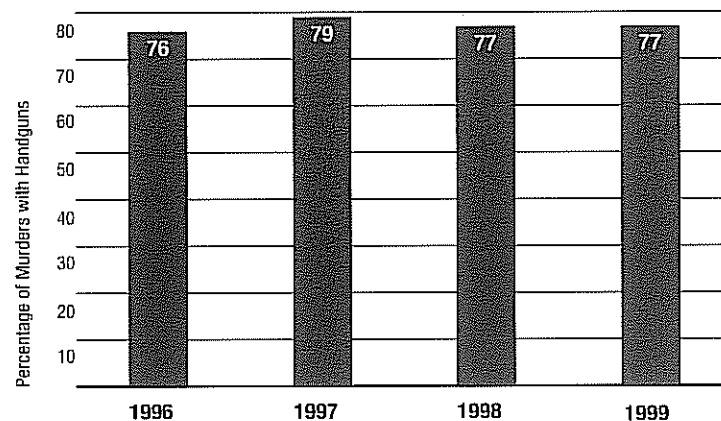
5.12 Number of Handgun Homicides, 1996-1999

Over four years, the overall number of handgun homicides dropped significantly in Philadelphia, from 320 in 1996 to 228 in 1999.

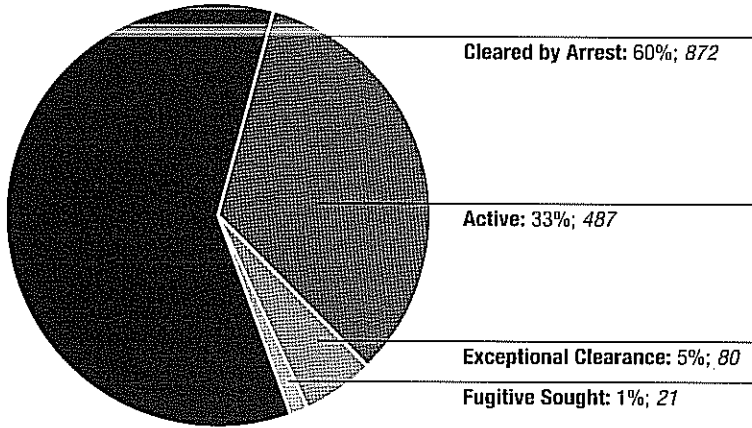


5.13 Handgun Homicides as Percentage of Total Homicides, 1996-1999

The proportion of homicides committed with handguns did not change over these four years; each year, handgun deaths accounted for about 78 percent of all deaths. This finding contradicts a national trend in which reduced gun homicides drive down overall murder numbers. In Philadelphia, murders with handguns versus other types were down about equally. This is true of murders of teens and young adults in Philadelphia as well.



The Aftermath



Clearance: Who gets caught?

6.1 Cleared versus Uncleared Homicides, 1996-1999

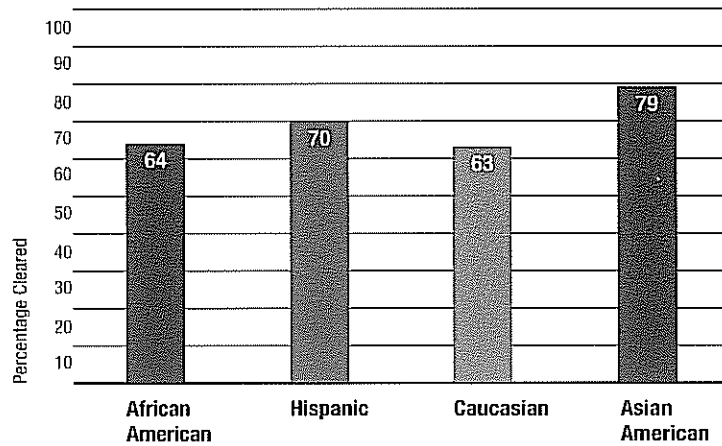
As of November 30, 2000, the Philadelphia Police Department had cleared¹⁷ 65 percent of the homicides committed between 1996 and 1999.¹⁸ Out of 1,460 homicides, 952 have been cleared.¹⁹ Homicides can be ruled cleared in two circumstances. Usually, the case is cleared when a suspect is identified and arrested. A case can also be declared "exceptionally cleared" if, for example, an identified suspect dies or is murdered.

Out of the 952 Philadelphia homicides that were cleared, 872 were cleared by arrest. Eighty cases were declared exceptional clearances.²⁰ About a third of all 1996-1999 homicides (487 in total) remained "active" and under investigation as of November 30, 2000. In 21 additional cases, a fugitive is currently being sought.

Readers should note that a case that is cleared does not necessarily result in a conviction. When the police make an arrest and turn the alleged murderer over to the District Attorney's Office for prosecution, they consider the case cleared. This report does not examine the number of convictions that resulted from police clearances.

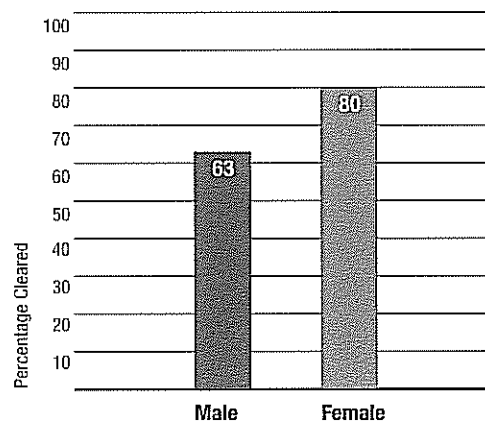
6.2 Homicide Clearance by Race of Victim, 1996-1999

In Philadelphia, the clearance percentage differed by race, but not widely. Over three-quarters of the murders of Asian Americans were cleared (79%); however, it is important to note that Asian Americans represented by far the smallest number of offenders and murder victims. Murders of 70 percent of Hispanic victims were cleared, as were murders of 64 percent of African Americans and 63 percent of Caucasians.



6.3 Homicide Clearance by Gender of Victim, 1996-1999

Murders of females were much more likely to be cleared. Eight out of 10 female victims' cases were cleared (80%) compared with 63 percent for male victims' cases.





Policy Recommendations

Between 1990 and 1999, homicides in the City of Philadelphia fell by 42 percent. In 2000, however, the number of homicides rose by 8 percent to a total of 319. Despite rises and falls in the year-to-year numbers, it seems clear that the city must develop new strategies or enhance those that exist in order to significantly and consistently decrease the number of homicides.

After reviewing this report, some will argue that the only solution to the homicide problem is to incarcerate more people for longer periods. This report does not advocate for or against increased incarceration. Violent offenders may belong in prison, but as a practical matter, it is impossible to incarcerate everyone who has run afoul of the law. Forty-five thousand adults are currently on probation in Philadelphia. Nine thousand more are fugitives. The city's prison capacity is about 6,200. The state's capacity is officially about 26,000 and currently operates at 143 percent of capacity, housing 38,000 inmates.²¹ Prison beds can cost anywhere from \$20,000 to \$50,000 per year.

As a crime-fighting strategy, incarceration has its limitations, which is precisely why the criminal justice system uses probation and community-based rehabilitation to deal with so many lawbreakers.

But the homicide figures that this report has uncovered suggest that if both probation and community-based rehabilitation are not dramatically improved, we will find ourselves with no choice but to build more prisons.

Accordingly, we recommend pursuing solutions in the following three categories:

● **Containment**

Philadelphia must reduce the threat that known offenders pose to their communities, most notably through reform of the probation and parole systems.

● **Prevention**

Philadelphia must divert young people from patterns of crime that culminate in homicide, most notably with community-based, anti-violence programs.

● **Accountability**

All of Philadelphia's public safety programs, including the probation and parole systems, and any publicly funded, independent programs must be made equally accountable for their performance and judged by their contribution to public safety.

These are, of course, general recommendations, and virtually every chart and graph in this report presents a specific challenge: how can we help the women threatened by domestic violence or the children threatened by abuse? How can we address the specific problem facing the African-American community? Must December be such a bloody month? How can we reduce the number of guns on the streets? How can we effectively fight the local drug trade?

These are worthy questions, each deserving of special attention, but we cannot attempt to address them all. We hope that their advocates find this report useful in targeting and structuring their efforts to reduce any and all kinds of violence.

However, it is P/PV's belief that all of them will benefit from a broad-based effort to contain the threat posed by known offenders, prevent young offenders from moving on to more serious crime and increase the accountability of those charged with maintaining and improving public safety.

Containment: Rethinking Probation

If the goal is to reduce the threat that known offenders pose to their communities, then the time is ripe for a close look at the existing probation system.²²

The probation system is the only public institution that has direct authority over non-incarcerated criminal offenders. Individuals on probation or parole are not entirely "free"; they are permitted to live in their communities if, and only if, they maintain a certain standard of behavior. As an enforcing arm of the judiciary, probation is the only system that can compel them to maintain that standard.

This study's findings indicate that that standard must be elevated and more effectively enforced.

Among this study's most shocking findings is the fact that, among a random sample of alleged murderers, some 25 percent were

actually on probation at the time of their crime. Another 29 percent were awaiting trial or sentencing and could have been under supervision.²³ Thus, over half of these alleged murderers (54%) were in a position in which their behavior could have, or should have, been monitored by a law enforcement agency.

By this estimate, between 1996 and 1999, it is possible that hundreds of people died at the hands of someone who was already in the hands of the criminal justice system.²⁴ To someone from outside that system, this is an obvious indication that probation has failed.

A System Under Stress

It is certainly true that the existing probation system operates under a great deal of stress. In Philadelphia, about 225 probation officers are responsible for overseeing 45,000 adult probationers. A separate system handles thousands of juvenile probationers. Caps on prison populations force a constant stream of new faces into the system simply to clear room in jail for other offenders. It is not uncommon for adult probation officers in the city to have caseloads of 200 or more, leaving them with about 12 minutes per probationer over the course of a 40-hour work week. Officers must complete paperwork, go to court, attend training and perform any number of bureaucratic tasks as a part of their regular duties.

Furthermore, the probation system itself is actually several systems. Most Philadelphians who are on probation are under the supervision of the city's Court of Common Pleas, which has separate divisions for adult and

juvenile probation. Other probation officers work for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania supervising offenders who have completed state prison sentences, and few probationers or parolees are under the supervision of federal parole officers.²⁵

But the limitations of probation departments are perhaps clearest when one considers their budgets. According to the Reinventing Probation Council (see below), while states spend as much as \$50,000 to incarcerate an adult for one year, they may spend as little as \$200 per year to supervise an offender on probation.

Given all this, it is not surprising that probation cannot provide offenders with much meaningful supervision.

Many in the probation community point out that given the huge number of probationers and the relatively small number that commit homicide, their “failure rate” is less than 1 percent. But consider this: if the Federal Aviation Administration accepted a similar failure rate, commercial airliners would crash daily. Were that to occur, how long would Congress wait before grounding the entire fleet of aircraft? How long before the FAA restructured the system to better ensure public safety?

The answer: not long. In Philadelphia, the equivalent of such a “crash” may happen as often as every other day, when someone who could or should be under public supervision takes someone else’s life.

Establishing New Standards

A new standard for probation is needed. Effective probation should work to eliminate violent crime among probationers.

In 2000, the national Reinventing Probation Council (RPC) released a study, titled *Transforming Probation through Leadership: The “Broken Windows” Model*.²⁶ In it, the RPC, which includes probation executives, members of the judiciary and academics, argued that probation departments, like police departments, must do more than just punish those who commit crimes; they must help maintain community standards of behavior. Like the modern cop who is asked to keep his eye peeled for broken windows, the ideal probation officer must stay on top of little violations before they escalate into serious crimes.

To that end, the RPC offers a blueprint of reform. Essentially they call on probation departments to stop acting like bureaucracies and start acting like what they are supposed to be: both law enforcers and social service providers. Their specific recommendations include the following:

- Probation departments must acknowledge that public safety is their paramount responsibility.
- Probation departments must hold their executives accountable for performance, using a variety of safety-related measurements (see “Accountability” below).
- Probation departments should move away from “fortress probation” and supervise probationers in their neighborhoods, not just out of an office. In addition, probation

officers need to be on the street during those hours when crimes most often occur, not just during traditional office hours.

- Probation departments must learn to allocate resources more effectively, targeting those who are most likely to violate their probation and whose offenses pose an increased public safety risk.
- Probation departments must enforce violations more stringently, moving quickly to punish failed drug tests and curfews and to aggressively track down absconders.
- Probation departments must create genuine partnerships with community organizations, schools, businesses and other law enforcement agencies with the goal of reducing recidivism, increasing public safety and increasing the probability that offenders will complete their probation successfully and become positive contributors to their community.

Among RPC's findings are that probation departments try to do many of these things but are hamstrung not only by bureaucratic demands but also by limited budgets. Indeed, the funding disparity between probation and prison is extraordinary, as mentioned above.

Nonetheless, it is P/PV's recommendation that no significant increases in probation funding be made without related increases in their accountability to the public.

Prevention: Diverting At-Risk Youth from Violent and Criminal Behavior

The data are unequivocal: preventing tomorrow's homicide means working with today's young people, especially its young men.

One murder in 10 is committed by a juvenile aged 12 to 17. But one in two (53%) is committed by a young adult, aged 18 to 24, and typically those young adults are already known to the criminal justice system, with rap sheets that include weapons, drug and assault charges. The same is true of victims: many are young adults with criminal records.

Any serious attempt to reduce Philadelphia homicides must deal directly with the young people aged 12 to 24 who are the most likely to commit a murder or become a murder victim. An alert criminal justice system could identify these individuals and steer them into initiatives designed to help them avoid the cemetery and the penitentiary and help get them on a path toward a productive adult life.

Once again, it is worth pointing out that many of these young people are already in the care of the justice system. The city has the option of incarcerating some in juvenile facilities. Probation is another possibility, one that would be more effective if the recommendations above were implemented.

But this is not enough. The city should support a broader range of community-based efforts to work with high-risk youth, relying on

the framework established by the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act.²⁷ According to this state law, the principles of balanced, restorative justice are:

- To protect the community;
- To hold young people accountable for their behavior; and
- To make every effort to develop the competencies young people need to become productive members of society.

Working with Community Partners

Effective partnerships between public and private organizations are paramount if Philadelphia is to work effectively with its young people.

On the public side, a number of agencies are responsible for dealing with young offenders and at-risk youth. These include the juvenile probation department, the Department of Human Services (DHS), Family Court, the District Attorney's Office, the police, and the school system.

On the private side, numerous community-based projects seek to work with young people and help them turn their lives around. All of these agencies, public and private alike, need to better coordinate their efforts in order to minimize homicide in Philadelphia.

Several community-based, public-private efforts that fit this framework are already in place. One, a program called Don't Fall Down in the 'Hood, goes right at the heart of the problem by seeking to get the guns out of young people's hands. The program is run by the Institute for the Development of African-American Youth (IDAAY); it takes young

people who have been charged with gun possession and puts them through an intensive 16-week program aiming to dissuade them from carrying firearms. Don't Fall Down in the 'Hood addresses an important need; 47 percent of the alleged murderers examined in this study were charged with a weapons offense prior to committing a murder.

A more ambitious example is the Youth Violence Reduction Project (YVRP), which currently targets 100 young people in the 24th and 25th police districts who are likely to kill or be killed.²⁸ A joint effort of the City of Philadelphia and community and nonprofit organizations including P/PV, YVRP seeks to get tough early with young offenders by promoting intense supervision by police and probation officers, zero tolerance for gun possession and an expedited judicial process for those who violate probation. On the other hand, YVRP works to make sure participants are doing positive things like continuing their education, working, participating in training programs or attending substance-abuse treatment programs.

While it is too soon to definitively evaluate the effectiveness of YVRP or its partnerships, the early results are promising. Furthermore, important relationships between community groups and public agencies are developing along with the project. YVRP partners include the juvenile and adult probation departments, the police, the District Attorney's Office, Philadelphia Anti-Drug Anti-Violence Network, Philadelphia Safe and Sound, Department of Human Services, P/PV, the school district, local clergy and community groups.

These are only two of the well-intentioned efforts around the city that need to be encouraged and supported. Furthermore, law enforcement officials need to learn about these efforts so that they can direct young people into them when the opportunity is available.

Using Probation for Transformation

It is clear that the probation system needs to better protect the communities it serves by keeping closer tabs on the offenders it supervises. However, if the probation system is going to become a community partner in preventing crime, it may well have to consider improving its ability to connect offenders with services that help them become productive and successful.

In other words, the probation system needs to accept the task of helping offenders, especially young ones who have not yet committed the worst of crimes, transform their lives.

Those who think this approach overly ambitious should consider the example of welfare reform. For many years, welfare caseworkers, like probation officers, were largely responsible for keeping up with their clients' paperwork. They were not charged with changing client behavior. But now caseworkers are responsible for overseeing a process of transformation, using job searches, training and placement. Clients who want to stay in the system's good graces must comply.

Probation departments have similar potential, wielding an even bigger "hammer" over their clients than welfare departments. Could probation departments effectively compel participation in literacy, job readiness or other programs? Probation departments already work in this manner, but they need to improve. RPC reports that over 90 percent of probationers are ordered to get substance-abuse counseling, for example, but only 50 percent comply. Of those who do not comply, only 20 percent end up in jail. The "hammer" isn't worth much if it isn't used.

Philadelphia's Family Court is having success with a program called Networking for Jobs, which compels people who have not paid their child support to participate in job training and job search. Many men are finding good work and supporting their families as a result.

Such strategies could be applied to probation. The key is to have effective community-based programming available and to make participation a worthwhile requirement for probationers.

Accountability: Answering to the Public

None of the recommendations above will work if the institutions involved are not accountable for their performance. Simply throwing money into probation departments or nonprofit agencies will not help.

Making nonprofit programs accountable is relatively straightforward. They must not only deliver services; they must also keep track of their results and provide all the information necessary for consistent evaluation of their activity. The focus on outcomes in recent years has provided public officials with a wealth of information on how to measure and judge reasonably the work done by social service programs, and everyone who gets involved with publicly funded, anti-violence programs should be ready from the outset to be fully and fairly accountable not only for finances but also for performance.

Making an established public system like the probation department accountable is another question altogether.

RPC's recommendations concerning probation accountability are detailed. They propose that probation systems report to the public on a number of measurements concerning probationers' behavior (rates of probation violations, absconder rates, re-arrest rates, etc.), the effectiveness of probation as punishment (levels of curfews and other restrictions, collection of fines, work programs, etc.), and crime prevention (number of referrals to drug treatment and education programs, involvement with community groups and police, etc.). In keeping with the principle that "that which gets measured gets done," RPC suggests that probation departments need to be held to specific standards if significant change is to occur.

It is also possible, however, that real probation reform will require a fundamental shift of authority.

As noted earlier, the probation system is actually a set of systems. But while some probationers are overseen by state or even federal officers, most Philadelphia probationers are overseen by the Court of Common Pleas, the city's main judicial branch. This is not unusual; nationwide, probation departments are most commonly controlled by the court system. This state of affairs makes it very difficult for city councils and state legislatures to monitor the activity of probation departments and hold them accountable for their performance.

Philadelphia should consider shifting control of its probation departments from the Court of Common Pleas to the executive branch of local government. No federal law prohibits executive branches from running probation departments, and New York City has already made this move. By doing so, the city would open up the operations of this critical public safety institution to a level of public scrutiny equal to that required of the police.

If left in the control of the court system, the probation department should still be made accountable at significantly higher levels than it is today. And as noted previously, no significant increases in funding should be made without simultaneous increases in probation's accountability to the public.

Conclusion

The easiest conclusion to reach, based on Philadelphia's homicide data, is that murder is an intractable and confounding fact of modern urban existence.

Given the cheap and easy availability of handguns, the city's pervasive poverty and the power of the drug trade, it is easy to understand why violent deaths are commonplace in the city's most troubled neighborhoods.

And given the extraordinary fact that Philadelphia, even in these days of economic resurgence, has averaged one murder per day for the past four years, it is easy to throw up one's hands and ask, "How can you stop it?" Murders fall into so many different categories that they would seem to defy a common solution. Young men in poor neighborhoods need one kind of attention. Violent offenders on probation need another. Women and children threatened by domestic violence need still another. Store owners threatened by potentially fatal robberies, drug dealers working their heavily contested corners, young people carrying firearms for prestige or protection—these are all potential victims whose safety requires different solutions.

But we cannot simply give up. We can contain the threat posed by known offenders if we supervise them with the stringency their communities deserve. We can prevent young offenders from becoming more serious criminals if we target them and work with them by coordinating the public and private institutions already dedicated to the task. We can improve the performance of those institutions by making them accountable for their work.

Given everything we know about homicide, we would be derelict in our duty to Philadelphia's communities if we do not better organize our efforts to stop it.

We hope that this analysis helps the police to choose tactics and deploy resources. We hope, too, that it helps shed light on the current inadequacy of the probation and parole systems. And finally, we hope that it makes clear how difficult a task both these institutions face. The fact that murder is no mystery in Philadelphia does not mean it is easy to stop. The battle to reduce homicides must be fought on many fronts, and we hope that this analysis has clarified the challenge we face.

- 1 Four murders that were deemed homicides at the time of their occurrence were later declared unfounded (3) or justifiable (1). The eight Noe children murdered by their mother from 1949 to 1968 were judged homicides in 1997 and, in accordance with reporting procedures established by the FBI, recorded as murders in 1997. All 12 of these victims were removed from the analyses.
- 2 The Philadelphia population decreased by only 4 percent from July 1, 1995, to July 1, 1998, which does not explain the 30 percent decrease in the number of homicides (U.S. Census Bureau, 1995 and 1998). Therefore, for the remainder of this report, we will primarily discuss the number of homicides rather than homicide rates.
- 3 The age groupings adopted in this report, 0 to 5, 6 to 11, 12 to 17, 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, and 45 and older are similar to those used in other publications. They are inclusive: for example, the 18 to 24 group counts all 18-year-olds and all 24-year-olds.
- 4 Probation and parole are not identical. The key difference is that probation is given to convicted criminals in lieu of a jail sentence, while parole is granted to those who have already served part of a jail sentence. The two systems are, to some degree, conjoined. For example, the Philadelphia County Adult Probation and Parole Department supervises both those who are sentenced directly to probation and those who have been paroled after serving a sentence whose maximum is less than two years. Convicted criminals who are granted parole after serving a sentence whose maximum is greater than five years are supervised by a different agency, the state parole board. Paroled criminals serving sentences with maximums of between two and five years are put under the supervision of either adult probation or the state parole board, at a judge's discretion. Juvenile offenders granted either probation or parole, known as "after care," are overseen by the Juvenile Probation Department. Finally, those paroled after a conviction in federal court—a tiny fraction of the overall criminal population—are overseen by a federal parole board.
- 5 For details on the data and its content, see Appendix A: The Homicide Database.
- 6 Arrest data includes those individuals apprehended as of April 30, 2000. Twenty-one additional arrests for 1996-1999 homicides were made between May 1 and November 30, 2000. These additional cases were not included in any of Section Two's data except in Part Six, where clearances and arrests are reported.
- 7 For details on the sample study methodology, see Appendix B: Methodology of the Samples of Victims and Alleged Offenders.
- 8 A case is considered "cleared" when an arrest is made or the case is closed for other reasons. See Part Six of this section for more details.
- 9 These individuals were not necessarily convicted of homicide or any other crime.
- 10 There were two homicides committed by groups of male Asian-American teens.
- 11 See Endnote 4 for details on the difference between probation and parole.
- 12 The ages of 16 victims are unknown.
- 13 Examples of violent crime are aggravated assault, simple assault and robbery. Examples of weapons charges are carrying a concealed weapon without a permit or having any weapon at school.
- 14 For this analysis, homicides were rounded to the nearest hour. For instance, any homicide that occurred from 10:31 to 11:30 p.m. was classified as an 11:00 p.m. murder.
- 15 Based on 851 homicides (for which data was available as of April 30, 2000) that were cleared by arrest. In cases where there were multiple offenders, we followed the practice of the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (as explained by Marianne W. Zawitz, BJS Statistician, and James Alan Fox, The Lipman Family Professor of Criminal Justice, Northeastern University) and used the race of the first offender listed for the analysis. The same technique was used for determining the prevalence of cross-gender and cross-age homicides.
- 16 The number of children killed by child abuse is probably higher. Police data include 16 victims of unknown age for whom the given motive of death was "child abuse"; it is likely, but not certain, that these were young children.
- 17 According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, law enforcement agencies clear or solve an offense "when at least one person is arrested, charged with the commission of the offense, and turned over to the court for prosecution" (Fox and Zawitz, 2000). In addition, a homicide may be "exceptionally cleared" in certain cases—for example, if the alleged offender dies before being arrested or tried for the crime. James Alan Fox and Marianne W. Zawitz, *Homicide Trends in the United States: 1998 Update*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000.

- 18 The FBI requires police to calculate a clearance rate by dividing the number of homicides cleared in a given year by the number of homicides committed in that year; meaning that the killings used to calculate the year's clearance rate may not have actually happened in the year that they were cleared. This can skew the numbers in strange ways; for example, if police make an arrest in 2001 and charge the individual with committing 10 murders in 1995, the arrest for these 10 murders will be reported, in accordance with the FBI guidelines, as part of the 2001 clearance rate. The Philadelphia Police Department's reported clearance rates for the years covered in this study are higher than that reported here because of such factors. Nationwide, the clearance rate reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is also calculated in this manner (clearances in a year divided by killings in a year, as opposed to, say, clearances of 1996 murders divided by total 1996 murders); BJS reported a 67 percent clearance rate for the nation between 1996 and 1998. That does not mean that 67 percent of the murders that occurred between 1996 and 1998 were cleared. What it means is that the number of murders reported in that year was about one-third greater than the number of killings solved.
- 19 Homicides later deemed justifiable (such as self-defense) have been removed from the data in this study.
- 20 This is the most up-to-date data available at publication, reflecting arrests and clearances as of November 30, 2000. The rest of the offender data in this report uses the arrest records that were available as of April 30, 2000. As noted earlier, 21 arrests were made between the two dates, a figure that would slightly, but not substantively, affect the data presented throughout Section Two.
- 21 Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, Monthly Institutional Profile as of December 31, 2000. <http://www.cor.state.pa.us/statistics.htm>.
- 22 As noted in Endnote 4, probation and parole are not identical systems. However, the majority of non-incarcerated adults who are nonetheless serving a sentence are supervised by the probation system. It carries by far the greatest responsibility for overseeing convicted criminals who live among the community at large.
- 23 The presiding judge has the discretion to place someone awaiting trial or sentencing under supervision.
- 24 Recall that the 54 percent figure was derived from a randomly selected group of 100 murderers who were arrested and charged for murders committed from 1996 to 1999 in the 25th police district. The citywide percentage could be higher or lower than 54 percent.
- 25 See Endnote 4.
- 26 Reinventing Probation Council, *Transforming Probation through Leadership: The "Broken Windows" Model*. Ronald P. Corbett, Jr., (ed.) New York: Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, 2000.
- 27 42 Pa.C.S. section 6301 et seq.
- 28 Joseph Tierney and Anaïs Loizillon, *Violence Reduction*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1999.

Appendix A: The Homicide Database

The information presented in this report is drawn from a database of information concerning the homicides of 1,460 individuals, all of whom were killed within the Philadelphia city limits between January 1, 1996, and December 31, 1999. Following a review of these 1,460 cases, the Research and Planning Department of the Philadelphia Police Department was able to provide P/PV with a database containing:

- Homicide number
- Report number
- District and sector where the homicide occurred
- Occurrence date (day, month and year)
- Time of day that the homicide occurred
- UCR code (weapon used in the homicide)
- Address where the homicide occurred (street name and number, if known), as well as basic location information (residence, highway, commercial establishment, river, public transit, etc.)
- Primary motive for the homicide (as best determined by homicide detectives)
- Indirect drug secondary motive (as best determined by homicide detectives)
- Homicide investigation status (arrest, active, fugitive sought, exceptional clearance)
- Victim's first and last name
- Victim's age, gender and race
- District where victim lived
- Victim's photo identification number

The Philadelphia Police Department's Office of Research and Planning also provided P/PV with information on the 1,037 alleged murderers who, as of April 30, 2000, had been charged with homicides committed between January 1, 1996, and December 31, 1999. These arrestees were charged with 851 of the 1,460 homicides committed during that period; the number of arrestees is higher than the number of homicides with which they were charged because some homicides were committed by more than one person. Again, this information was gathered from the homicide files and compiled by the Philadelphia Police Department. The resulting offender database included the following information:

- Initial homicide number
- Initial homicide district
- Offender's first and last name
- Offender's age, gender and race
- Offender's photo identification number

The statistics presented in this report may differ slightly from that generated by other homicide databases because some cases originally included in police data as homicides have been removed. Most notably, the police department agreed, on P/PV's suggestion, to eliminate eight children who died in the 1950s (the so-called Noe murders), whose deaths were deemed homicides in 1997, and thus, included in 1997's homicide figures (see Endnote 1).

Appendix B: Methodology of the Samples of Victims and Alleged Offenders

As noted in the text, police homicide reports do not routinely include data concerning the criminal history or current status within the justice system for the victims or suspects in a given killing. To examine these aspects of homicide, P/PV randomly selected 100 victims and 100 alleged murderers and investigated their criminal histories and current status.

The lists of victims and alleged murderers used for P/PV's sample were selected independently of one another. However, all 100 on each list were randomly selected from among the homicide victims and alleged homicide offenders in the 25th police district.

The 25th police district was selected for the sample because it has the highest rate of homicide and violent crime in the city. Statistically, there are some small differences between the homicides that occurred in the 25th police district versus those that occurred in the entire city. For instance, 93 percent of the 25th police district's victims are men compared with 86 percent for the city as a whole. Among offenders, 98 percent of the 25th police district's alleged murderers are men compared with 94 percent for the whole city. The pattern of homicides by year also differs slightly for the 25th police district.

Random selection yielded a sample that closely mirrored the profile of all victims and offenders in the 25th police district. The sample of victims is 90 percent male, slightly lower than the 93 percent in the 25th police district as a whole. The sample of offenders is 99 percent male, one percentage point more than the 98 percent in the 25th police district as a whole. The sample included 25 victims murdered in 1996, 30 in 1997, 27 in 1998 and 18 in 1999. Similarly, the sample of offenders included 24 offenders from 1996 homicides, 32 from 1997, 27 from 1998 and 17 from 1999.

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