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The cover alphabetically lists victims of  
homicide in the District between January  
1986 and June 1991.

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**JUL 24 1992**  
**ACQUISITIONS**

# LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

**T**he statistics in this report are alarming. However, this crime wave is not new to Washington or this nation. The level of violence has been increasing since 1985; fueled by crack, the enterprise of drug dealers and a counter-culture that fundamentally rejects the time-honored values of our community. As a community and as a society, we must marshal all of our resources to combat the violence within our city.

We are taking immediate action to protect our residents from the rising level of violence. Community policing is becoming a reality in the District. In the past year, 300 more officers have been assigned to walk the beat. We are also strengthening penalties for those engaging in violent crime and a new witness protection plan is being created. We are supporting bail reform laws to keep violent criminals off the streets. But, these

measures alone are not the entire solution. The disintegration of families, a lack of opportunity and substandard health and education have all taken their toll on youth during the last decade. The foundation of our efforts must be geared toward assisting the youth of the District.

Recently, I announced a major, comprehensive initiative that redirects our resources to begin addressing the underlying causes of violence. Our *Children First* initiative seeks to redress the inadequacies from which too many youth suffer. It is based on a long-term philosophy aimed at early prevention and real community-based health care. It calls for the restoration of funding for drug treatment programs and new services with special attention to pregnant women. Federal funding for programs such as *Healthy Start* will help us support and assist parents in meeting the health and developmental needs of youth at risk in our community.

Other measures being taken include creation of a stronger early detection program to identify children in need of special assistance in the school system,

a campaign to immunize every 2-year-old child in the district, a new public awareness program to combat pregnancy among teenagers, expansion of services at 10 existing neighborhood empowerment centers, and development of several pilot *Turning Point* centers, which help children develop socially responsible values and behavior.

I believe that we can change the dynamic of violence and reclaim the full health of our community. The information in this report is troubling; but, together we can make a difference in ensuring a less troubled future.

*Sharon Pratt Kelly*

# INTRODUCTION

**I**n 1988, the Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis (OCJPA) released a report entitled *Homicide in the District of Columbia*. That report was the first of its kind for the District and among only a few nationally. The report examined the critical problem of homicide through a comprehensive comparison of statistical information and review of a range of homicide-related issues. The report provided insight to what had emerged in only a few years as a problem of enormous proportions - homicide in the District of Columbia.

In 1988, the District had a record number of homicides and became distinguished for the highest homicide rate in nation. Newspapers across the country and around the world focused daily on what was happening on the streets of the nation's capital. A major network created a nightly show devoted to updating and discussing the violent and fatal events of the day. The District was labeled a "city under siege."

Fear, concern, helplessness, outrage and mourning for the senseless killings became a daily part of the lives of people in the District. People were not accustomed and did not understand this level of violence and why it was escalating. At the same time came the recognition that understanding must be sought so that change could be made and the health, safety and peace of the community could be restored.

Three years later in 1991, the District is still distinguished as having the highest homicide rate in the nation for the fourth consecutive year. This phenomenon is now understood as part of a larger national

problem. All segments of the District's communities have begun to identify factors that are associated with the rise and seriousness of homicide and violence. This study is part of the ongoing effort to reverse the trend of violence, solve the many problems associated with it and change this situation.

*OCJPA's Homicide Report* re-examines the problem from the criminal justice and public health perspectives and also introduces new information. This study presents a comprehensive review of homicide in the District by analyzing both victims and assailants as distinct groups, in relation to one another, and in relation to the homicide incident.

The population for this study includes all homicide victims and persons arrested for homicide in the District from 1986 to 1991. Information presented about victims includes age, gender, race and residence. The section about assailants includes the aforementioned information in addition to educational background and an extensive discussion of criminal history. An analysis of victim and assailant involvement in government income maintenance programs is also provided.

This report also presents epidemiological (regarding the cause of death that affects large numbers of people in a locality) information about homicides in the District including the time of day, day of the week, month, area of the city and type of location where homicides occurred, and the weapons, methods and motives involved in the crime.

An extensive analysis of processing homicide cases through the criminal justice system, conducted by the Pretrial Services Agency, is included. This special study examines all cases filed from January 1986 through June 1991 and discusses findings regarding conviction rates, pretrial release and detention and case processing time.

Another special section of this report profiles youth who are incarcerated for homicide at Oak Hill Youth Center, the District's secure detention facility for juveniles. In recent years, involvement of youth as victims and perpetrators of homicide has escalated dramatically. The youth were interviewed individually to gain insight to how they perceive themselves, their crimes and their lives.

One purpose of the report published three years ago was to heighten awareness of the homicide problem in the District of Columbia. In 1992, every resident of the District is painfully aware of this problem. And, while all facets of the community have come together to meet the challenge of reducing homicide and violence, the problem persists and continues to escalate. It must be recognized also that it is only the accuracy and persistence of the attacker that separates an assault from a homicide. So, while the focus of this study is homicide, the issues and findings discussed can be applied to the broader problem of violence in the community. The purpose of this report now is to increase understanding of the factors that contribute to the proliferation of homicide so that the approaches to its prevention can be more appropriate and outcomes more successful.

# TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**H**omicide can be considered in two contexts: as a criminal act and as a cause of death. While homicide has traditionally been considered a criminal justice issue, in recent years, it has become recognized as a public health issue as well. This report addresses homicide as an issue of crime and victimization.

Homicide is defined as the reckless or intentional taking of human life by another individual. A homicide is categorized as either criminal or non-criminal. Criminal homicide refers to first and second degree murder, voluntary (non-negligent) and

involuntary (negligent) manslaughter. Non-criminal homicide is considered excusable, as in killing in self-defense, and justified, as in homicide performed as a legal duty by a police officer or executioner.

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

The District records, investigates and processes vehicular homicide separately from the types of homicides outlined above. Vehicular homicide is referred to as negligent homicide. Technically, the only factor that distinguishes a negligent homicide from

manslaughter is that a vehicle is involved. In some cases, a traffic death is not considered a homicide at all if there is no evidence of intent, gross negligence, or wanton and willful disregard of the law. In such a case, the death is considered simply as a traffic fatality. Negligent homicides are handled by the Traffic Division of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and are not recorded or investigated by the MPD's Homicide Branch.

# NATIONAL OVERVIEW

**T**o put this report about homicide in the District into perspective, this section provides an overview of homicide in the United States. Currently, homicide nationally comprises 1 percent of violent crime and less than 1 percent of all crime.

The increase in homicide is not only a local problem. Nationally, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), there were approximately 23,438 homicides committed in 1990, an increase of 8 percent from 1989 when 21,500 homicides were committed. This represents a rate of 9 murders per 100,000 people. Regionally, Southern states averaged a higher rate of homicide than any other region, with 12 homicides per 100,000 persons. Conversely, Midwestern states registered the lowest rate with 7 homicides per 100,000 persons.

Demographically, homicide victims in 1990 were mostly male and older than age 18. National figures for victims for 1990 reveal that 78 percent of victims were male, 90 percent were older than age 18 and, for victims whose race was known, 49 percent were black and 49 percent were white.

When incidents involved one victim and one offender, national data for 1990 show that homicides were overwhelmingly intraracial with 93 percent of black victims slain by black assailants and 86 percent of white victims killed by white assailants. Gender data, however, show an interesting difference in patterns for males and females. Eighty-five percent of male victims were killed by males, while 90 percent of female victims were murdered by males.

When considering homicides committed with weapons, national data for 1990 reveal that 3 out of 5 homicides, or 70 percent, were the result of firearms; 17 percent were the result of cutting or stabbing instruments, 5 percent were the result of objects of blunt force and 8 percent were the result of other dangerous weapons.

When considering homicides nationally in 1990 for which the relationship between the victim and assailant was known, data reveal that 14 percent of victims were related to their assailants and 37 percent of victims were acquainted with their assailants. Moreover, 30 percent of all female victims were slain by husbands or boyfriends.

As homicides have increased, the number of persons arrested for homicide has also increased. With over 10,000 law enforcement agencies reporting arrest activities to the FBI in 1990, total arrests on the charge of murder and non-negligent manslaughter numbered 18,298, translating to a rate of 9.5 arrests per 100,000 residents.

However, an estimate of the number of arrests for homicide, including those made by agencies not reporting to the FBI is approximately 22,900. Southern states reported the highest arrest rate of 11.1 arrests per 100,000 population. The lowest arrest rate was reported by Northeastern states with 2,172 agencies reporting a rate of 6.8 arrests per 100,000 population.

The national profile of persons arrested for homicide is similar to that of homicide victims. Arrestees were also mostly male and older than age 18. The demographic data reveal that 90 percent of arrestees were male, 86 percent of arrestees were older than age 18, and, for arrestees whose race was known, 55 percent of arrestees were black and 44 percent were white.

# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF HOMICIDE TRENDS

**T**he increasing homicide rate is not only a problem in the District of Columbia. Other U.S. cities are experiencing a rise in homicides and record-setting numbers. Three of the nation's 10 largest cities, Dallas, Phoenix and San Diego, as well as cities as diverse as Milwaukee, Jackson, MS; New Haven, CT; Chattanooga, TN; Colorado Springs, Charlotte, NC and Rochester, NY have reported record numbers of homicides in 1991.

A comparative analysis of the homicide rates from 1960 to 1990 in the ten U.S. cities with populations of 500,000 or more with the highest homicide rates reveals the variable incidence of homicide. The analysis included Dallas, Houston, Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, New Orleans, Memphis, Philadelphia, New York City and the District because they had the highest homicide rates in 1960. Data reveals that there was no

consistent pattern of ranking among the cities during this 30-year period. Dallas, Cleveland, Detroit and the District each had the dubious distinction of "murder capital" at one time or another in the past 30 years. There was also no consistent pattern when examining rates within cities. Rates for Houston and Cleveland, for example, peaked in 1980 with respective rates of 39.1 and 46.3 homicides per 100,000 population. In Houston, the homicide rate has been decreasing since that time. On the other hand, rates in Baltimore, New Orleans and Dallas, like the District, peaked in 1990 with rates ranging from 41.4 to 78.1 homicides per 100,000 (Table A-1).

The District's homicide rate was lowest in 1960 with 10.6 homicides per 100,000 residents. Even so, at that time, the District was ranked fourth highest of the ten cities studied. Between 1960 and 1965, the homicide rate steadily increased and, by 1965, homicides numbered 148, translating to a rate of 18.4 per 100,000 residents. The homicide rate again peaked in 1969 and 1971 with respective rates of 36.0 and 37.1 homicides per 100,000 population. The next highest homicide rate occurred in 1974 when, although homicides numerically were not the highest, the declining District population contributed to a rate of 38.3 homicides per 100,000 population. By 1988, homicides in the District both numerically and by rate had surpassed previous years, numbering a record 369 homicides and a rate of 59.5 homicides per 100,000, surpassing Detroit with the highest rate in the nation (Table A-2).

In 1989, the District continued to have the highest homicide rate at 70.0 per 100,000 followed by Detroit which had a rate of 60 homicides per 100,000 population. The homicide rate for 1990 was 78.1 in the District. In 1991, the District ended the year with a total of 483 homicides. This reflects a rate of 79.6 homicides per 100,000 population, distinguishing the District as having the highest homicide rate in the nation for the fourth consecutive year.



# THE VICTIM



atters relating to the victim have generally been regarded more as a public health issue than a criminal justice issue.

When homicide is discussed from a criminal justice perspective, the focus is primarily on investigating the criminal act and apprehending the assailant. A public health view examines homicide as a premature and unnatural cause of death that affects large numbers of people and seeks to uncover factors that will help to understand and prevent it. However, there is limited victim information available from sources other than criminal justice agencies. Data for this section was gathered from the Metropolitan Police Department.

## Age

As the number of homicides has increased, the age of the victims has lowered. In 1986, approximately 44 percent of the victims of homicide were under the age of 30. By 1991, the majority of victims (65 percent) were under 30 years of age. Specifically, there has been a marked increase in the number of homicide victims ages 18 to 20. In 1986, there were 11 homicide victims ages 18 to 20 which represented 6 percent of all victims that year. Each subsequent year, the number of victims in this age group increased until 1991 when 91 homicide victims were ages 18 to 20, representing 19 percent of all victims (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1  
Age of Victims  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
17 and Under	12	6	14	6	22	6	30	7	24	5	56	11
18-20	11	6	15	7	36	10	47	11	93	18	91	19
21-22	14	7	21	9	16	4	14	3	44	9	51	10
23-24	18	9	8	4	23	6	33	8	38	8	43	9
25-29	32	16	40	18	50	14	56	13	94	19	76	16
30-34	28	14	18	8	39	11	64	15	71	15	59	12
35-39	22	11	17	8	20	5	30	7	36	7	37	8
40-44	11	6	10	4	15	4	13	3	32	7	29	6
45-49	12	6	1	<1	9	2	13	3	12	2	17	3
50+	14	7	10	4	16	4	14	3	31	6	30	6
Unknown	20	10	71	32	123	33	120	28	9	2	0	0
Total	194		225		369		434		484*		489*	

\* Figures include homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

## Race and Gender

The proportion of homicide victims that are female (regardless of race) or white male has almost consistently decreased since 1986. Until 1990, the percentage of black female homicide victims had consistently declined. By 1989, the proportion of black female homicide victims was at its lowest point comprising 8 percent of homicide victims. In 1990, the percentage increased to 11 percent and in 1991, 14 percent of victims were black females. The percentage of white male victims has decreased from 8 percent of victims in 1986 to 3 percent in 1991. White females historically have not comprised a large proportion of homicide victims and by 1990 had fallen to less than 1 percent. Black males constitute the largest proportion of homicide victims peaking in 1989 when this group comprised 83 percent. In 1990, black males, though still the majority of homicide victims in any one race/gender category, decreased to comprise 82 percent of victims. This trend continued into 1991 when black males comprised 79 percent of homicide victims proportionately and numerically less than in 1990 (Table 2).

Figure 1  
Age of Victims  
Calendar Years 1986 & 1991

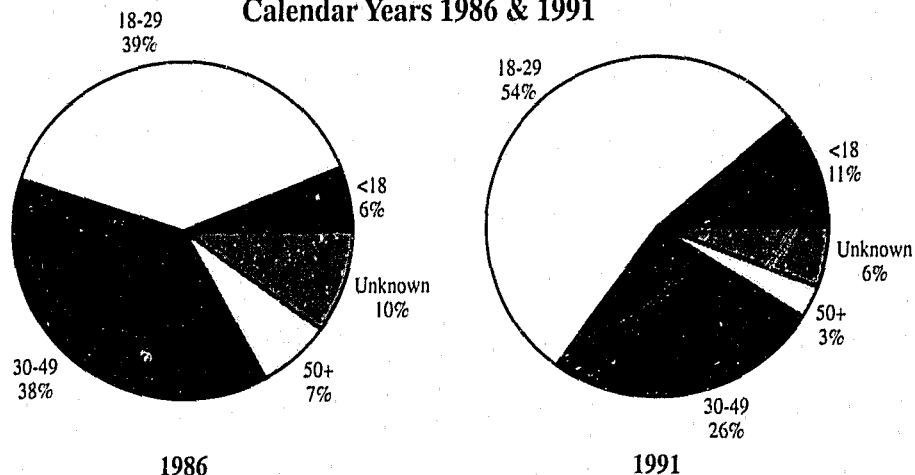


Table 2  
Race and Gender of Victims  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Black Male	136	70	165	73	283	77	358	83	398	82	388	79
Black Female	29	15	35	16	50	14	36	8	52	11	66	14
White Male	15	8	12	5	18	5	16	4	15	3	12	3
White Female	6	3	2	1	4	1	7	2	3	<1	6	1
Unknown/Other	8	4	11	5	14	4	13	3	16	3	17	3
Total	194		225		369		434		484*		489*	

\* Figures include homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

# THE ASSAILANT

**I**n this section, information about the assailant refers to individuals arrested for homicide in the District, not necessarily people who have been convicted for committing homicide. Additionally, the number of people arrested for homicide will vary from the number of homicides committed since people arrested in a given year may have committed the murder in a previous year and a given assailant may be responsible for more than one homicide. There were 135 persons arrested for homicide in 1986, 133 in 1987, 186 in 1988, 332 in 1989, 341 in 1990 and 185 in the first six months of 1991. Assailant information was gathered from the District's Metropolitan Police Department and the Pretrial Services Agency (PSA).

## Age

As was the case with victims, the ages of those arrested for homicide has lowered. In 1986, 38 percent of the alleged assailants were younger than age 25. By 1990, the majority (64 percent) were in this age group. The greatest number of arrestees were ages 25 to 29 in 1986 and by 1990, the greatest number of arrestees were ages 18 to 20.

There has been a gradual increase in the number of juveniles arrested for homicide. In 1986, 8 juveniles were arrested, comprising 6 percent of total homicide arrestees. By 1990, 67 juveniles were arrested constituting 20 percent of homicide arrestees. Conversely, 15 percent of arrestees in 1986 were age 40 and older while in 1990, less than 6 percent of arrestees fell within this age range.

Table 3  
Age of Alleged Assailants  
Calendar Years 1986-June 1991

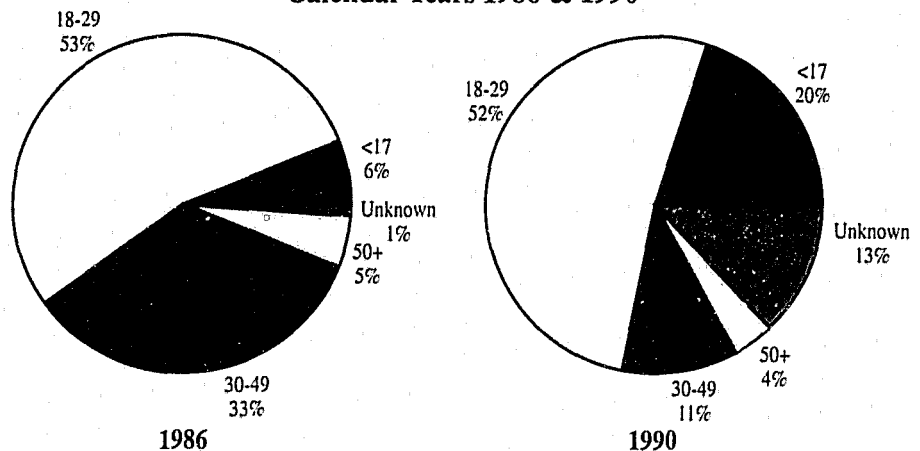
	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991*	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
17 and Under	8	6	9	7	26	14	63	19	67	20	19	10
18-20	20	15	17	3	44	24	78	23	97	28	76	41
21-22	10	7	12	9	17	10	32	10	33	10	11	6
23-24	13	10	16	12	28	15	28	8	21	6	6	3
25-29	29	22	29	22	28	15	38	11	28	8	19	10
30-34	15	11	17	13	20	11	15	4	17	5	12	7
35-39	17	13	10	8	6	3	19	6	16	5	9	5
40-44	10	7	7	5	10	5	13	4	3	<1	4	2
45-49	3	2	5	4	3	2	2	<1	2	<1	6	3
50+	7	5	8	6	4	2	2	<1	12	4	1	<1
Unknown	2	1	3	2	0	0	44	13	45	13	22	12
Total	134		133		186		334		341		185	

\* First 6 months 1991.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Figure 2  
Age of Alleged Assailants  
Calendar Years 1986 & 1990



Figures for the first six months of 1991 show that the percentage of juveniles arrested through June 1991 is half the number arrested in all of 1990. Nineteen juveniles were arrested, constituting 10 percent of all homicide arrestees. The number of arrestees age 40 and older continues to be low, with less than 6 percent of arrestees falling within this age range. The majority of homicide arrestees in any one age category fell between the ages of 18 and 20 with 76 persons arrested, or 41 percent of all arrestees (Table 3, Figure 2).

### Race and Gender

The profile of those arrested for homicide is very similar to that of victims. Proportionately, the number of black males arrested for homicide continues to rise as other categories decrease. In 1990, 93 percent of homicide arrestees were black males compared with 83 percent in 1986. Conversely, the percentage of black females has fallen from 10 percent in 1986 to 4 percent in 1990. Preliminary figures for 1991 show that 90 percent of arrestees were black males. The remaining 10 percent were either black females (5 percent) or white males (5 percent) (Table 4).

### Educational Background

Data provided by the PSA regarding educational background of persons arrested for homicide from 1986 through 1990 show that 5 percent (54) of the defendants had completed six years or less of school at the time of arrest. Sixty-two percent (723) had not completed high school or, conversely, 38 percent had completed high school. Eight percent (92) had received some form of post-secondary education.

Table 4  
Race and Gender of Alleged Assailants  
Calendar Years 1986-June 1991

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991*	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Black Male	112	83	114	86	171	90	295	89	316	93	166	90
Black Female	13	10	13	10	13	7	24	7	13	4	10	5
White Male	3	2	2	2	4	2	12	4	8	2	9	5
White Female	1	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	<1	0	0
Unknown/Other	6	4	4	3	2	1	3	<1	3	<1	0	0
Total	135		133		190		334		341		185	

\* First 6 months 1991.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

### Criminal History

Prior to appearing before a judicial officer, arrestees are interviewed by representatives of the PSA. The information obtained during the interview is supplied to the court in the form of a bail report. The purpose of the report is to assist the judicial officer in making an informed and individualized bail decision. Defendants are asked a series of standard questions concerning prior criminal convictions as well as current ties to the criminal justice system. The PSA conducts an independent local criminal history investigation and reports the results of both the record check and the defendant's self-reported data. Due to the confidentiality of juvenile records, no information concerning prior juvenile adjudications is included in the bail report. The following analysis is based on criminal history data from all 1,178 cases recorded with the PSA between 1986 and 1990.

**Criminal Convictions:** An evaluation of the criminal records of homicide arrestees reflects that 42 percent (498) had prior criminal convictions. Moreover, the majority (52 percent) of defendants with convictions had two or more. The age of an arrestee is an important factor when considering prior convictions. All but the most serious crimes committed before the age of 18 are routinely processed through the juvenile court. Since

62 percent of homicide cases involved arrestees age 25 or younger, the majority of defendants had limited exposure time to the adult criminal justice system. In fact, 10 percent or 116 of the 1,178 homicide cases involved arrestees who were age 17 or younger. The relative youth of persons arrested for homicide during the five-year study period is further documented by noting their age at first arrest. The vast majority (80 percent) were 25 years of age or younger, with 63 percent being age 20 or younger.

For purposes of analysis, criminal conviction charges were divided into five principal categories: felony, misdemeanor, felony drug, misdemeanor drug and homicide. Each group was classified as unique with no duplications among categories (e.g., A felony drug conviction was only counted in the drug category and not also as a felony conviction). Felony convictions represented the largest group with 21 percent of the cases having one or more such convictions at the time of the homicide arrest. Although some convictions are labeled and counted as non-drug felonies, in actuality, 16 percent of these felony convictions originated as drug charges.

Misdemeanors accounted for 18 percent (214) of prior convictions. Only 6 percent of the homicide cases had prior felony drug convictions listed at the time of arrest, with misdemeanor drug convictions accounting for an additional 15 percent. Similar to the situation described above concerning prior felony convictions, 43 of the 178 misdemeanor drug convictions were, in fact, the result of felony drug cases. Prior homicide convictions were listed in 1 percent (13) of cases.

Each conviction category was also examined by using the original arrest category. The three largest arrest categories, Murder I While Armed, Murder II While Armed and Other Charges, were compared and disclosed no significant differences in conviction records.

**Ties to the Criminal Justice System:** The term "ties" refers to status within the criminal justice process ranging from probation and parole to cases pending prosecution. Of the 1,178 cases, 239 (20 percent) of defendants were on some form of pretrial release at the time of their homicide arrest. In another 8 percent of the cases, the arrestees were on probation and 9 percent were under parole supervision. Since defendants may have multiple ties (e.g., be on probation and have a criminal case pending trial), those with at least one tie to the system (pending matters, probation or parole status) totaled 32 percent.

#### **Pending Cases at Time of Arrest:**

A further evaluation of pending cases was conducted to look at the types of charges for which arrestees were on release. Charges were divided into five groups: homicide, crimes defined by law as dangerous or violent (other than homicide), drug offenses, other charges and charges filed in the U.S. District Court (federal). The results indicate that crimes regarded as dangerous or violent (other than homicide) and drug offenses accounted for 33 percent and 36 percent respectively of the pending cases. Twenty percent of the remaining pending charges were other crimes, 9 percent were homicides and 3 percent were federal offenses.

**Rearrests while on Release:** In addition to having prior arrests, individuals are often rearrested while on release pending trial for an offense. Rearrest is defined as any arrest occurring after the date the homicide charge was filed in court and before the homicide case reached final disposition. Using this criteria, 180 or 15 percent of the cases indicated a rearrest.

It is important to note, however, that for various technical reasons, rearrest figures may be inflated. Updated or changed release status and bond posting information was missing in a large percentage of the cases. This was evidenced by the fact that over 50 percent of the rearrests occurred on cases listed as detained. Another factor effecting rearrest information results from some cases being presented directly to a grand jury without a typical arrest. Date of offense was not available in calculating rearrests. The 15 percent rate would not preclude such cases from being misrepresented as rearrests, when in fact the crime may have occurred much earlier. Data problems such as these will be significantly reduced with the complete implementation of the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) which is currently in progress. CJIS is a comprehensive automated database that will eventually contain complete and current criminal histories and processing status information accessible to all criminal justice agencies.

Nevertheless, the most serious charges in rearrest cases were ranked. Dangerous or violent crimes (other than homicide) were the most frequent rearrest charge representing 31 percent of the 180 rearrests, followed by 25 percent other crimes, 24 percent drug crimes, 13 percent homicides and 7 percent federal offenses.

**Subsequent Arrests:** Arrests occurring after disposition of the homicide are classified as subsequent arrests and occurred at a higher frequency than rearrests. It is important to note, however, that the majority of homicide defendants are detained in some manner while pending disposition and, therefore, are not at liberty to be rearrested. Since almost half the homicide cases are dropped (See section on case processing), a greater number of these people are at risk to have subsequent arrests. For those cases closed with no finding of guilt (447), 32 percent of the defendants had a subsequent arrest. An additional 4 percent of convicted cases were subsequently arrested.

The leading charge of subsequent offenses was for dangerous or violent crimes (other than homicide), accounting for 32 percent. Twenty-seven percent of the charges for the remaining subsequent arrests were for other crimes, 25 percent for drugs, 12 percent for homicides and 4 percent for federal crimes.

**Arrest Category and Status:** The criminal justice status of persons arrested in the three largest arrest categories (Murder I While Armed, Murder II While Armed and Other Charges) revealed differences as well as similarities. Twenty-three percent of persons arrested for Murder I While Armed had cases pending at the time of arrest, representing the largest proportion. Those arrested for Murder II While Armed and Other Charges comprised 18 percent and 21 percent respectively of arrestees with cases pending. The data reveal that persons with other charges were slightly more likely to be rearrested for murder, 22 percent, compared to 18 percent for Murder II While Armed and 12 percent of Murder I While Armed cases. However, since persons charged with murder are more frequently held without bond, they are less likely to be in the position to be rearrested.

**Drug Use:** Drug use data is based on confirmed results from urinalysis tests conducted by the PSA. Arrestees are tested for five substances — amphetamines, cocaine, opiates, methadone and PCP. Due to the changing trends in the level of drug use recorded over the last five years, results were analyzed by year and correlated with overall results from those years.

Data show that drug positivity for homicide arrestees was substantially lower than that of the general arrestee population. During the study period, the primary drugs of choice for persons arrested for homicide were cocaine and PCP (Table 5).

Analysis of the correlation between charge and drug use was limited to the categories Murder I While Armed and Murder II While Armed, since they represent 78 percent of the cases with drug test results and the numbers for the remaining categories were too small to be considered significant. Forty-six percent of the cases charged with Murder II While Armed indicated drug positivity compared with 34 percent of cases charged with Murder I While Armed. Consistent with overall drug data, cocaine was the drug most frequently detected, with

**Table 5  
Arrestees Testing Positive  
For Drug Use  
Calendar Years 1986-1990**

Year	Drug	Homicide Pos. Rate	Overall Pos. Rate
1986	All	44%	68%
	Cocaine	25%	40%
	PCP	24%	39%
1987	All	49%	72%
	Cocaine	31%	50%
	PCP	25%	43%
1988	All	64%	73%
	Cocaine	49%	64%
	PCP	25%	33%
1989	All	35%	67%
	Cocaine	32%	63%
	PCP	5%	17%
1990	All	26%	56%
	Cocaine	23%	53%
	PCP	3%	7%

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.  
Prepared by: Pretrial Services Agency.

34 percent of the Murder II While Armed and 26 percent of the Murder I While Armed testing positive. The age of arrestees testing positive gradually increased, ranging from 30 percent of persons ages 18 to 20, and peaking at 56 percent for those ages 31 to 35.

**Offenders Entering Lorton:**

The number of offenders entering Lorton as the result of homicide convictions increased from 54 in 1987 to 146 in 1990, including inmates serving time for manslaughter as well as attempted manslaughter, representing an increase of 170 percent. However, the percentage of inmates in Lorton for homicide offenses comprises only 2 percent of total offenders. Of the offenders serving time in the District's correctional facilities, the average minimum sentence for homicide is 4.6 years and the average maximum sentence is 23.5 years.

# PARTICIPATION IN FAMILY AND INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS

**S**tudies suggest that there is a relationship between socioeconomic status and crime. With regard to homicide, the relationship appears to be that people with lower income are more likely to be perpetrators and victims of homicide. Geographic information interfaced with income data reveal that the largest proportions of homicides occur in areas where income is the lowest. In an effort to examine this relationship as it pertains to the District residents, data regarding persons who were either convicted of homicide or victims of homicide between 1988 and 1990 were examined in relation to their participation in government family and income support programs.

Victim information was gathered from the Metropolitan Police Department death reports. There were 372 victims of homicide in 1988, 439 in 1989 and 483 in 1990 (Including justifiable homicides). Assailant information was based on data from the U.S. Attorney of persons whose final case disposition resulted in a conviction for homicide. There were 285 convictions during this time period for various classifications of homicide including 80 convictions for first degree murder while armed, 2 convictions for first degree murder, 4 convictions for

felony murder, 83 convictions for second degree murder while armed, 25 convictions for second degree murder and 62 convictions for the various manslaughter categories (manslaughter, voluntary manslaughter, voluntary manslaughter while armed).

Though there are many ways to measure socioeconomic status, one often-used indicator is participation in government family and income support programs for families, children and independent adults. Data regarding assailants and victims were correlated with data from the Department of Human Services (DHS), which operates certain family and income support programs for the District. These programs include Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Medicaid, General Public Assistance (GPA), Foster Care and Medical Charities. To qualify for AFDC, Medicaid or Medical Charities in the District, one's income and assets must fall below certain

minimum standards. To qualify for GPA, one must be determined as totally disabled. Foster care status applies to a child who is either a ward of the District or some other jurisdiction and is not being maintained in a District government non-medical institution.

For persons convicted of homicide, 44 percent (127) had either historically or at the time of conviction participated in one of the above listed support programs. Of those participating, the majority (61 percent or 77) were affiliated with AFDC either as a child or as an adult. Thirteen percent (16) were in

Table 6  
Victim and Assailant Participation in Family and Income Support Programs Calendar Years 1988-1990

	Assailants		Victims	
	#	%	#	%
Participation in Income Maintenance Program*	127	44	416	32
AFDC	77	61	248	60
Medicare/Medical Charities	53	42	177	43
Public Assistance	7	6	27	6
Foster Care	16	13	25	6
Previously Detained as Juvenile	4**	3	24	6

\* Categories are not mutually exclusive.

\*\* Does not include those detained for present offense.

Source: Department of Health and Human Services.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

foster care as children. Forty-two percent (53) were at one time unable to qualify for AFDC, but had income sufficiently low enough to be eligible for medical assistance in the form of Medicaid or Medical Charities. Additionally, aside from the detention for the offense of conviction, 3 percent (4) of assailants had been previously detained in one of the District's juvenile facilities (These categories are not mutually exclusive.) (Table 6).

When examining income program participation relative to conviction charges, 45 percent (39) of those convicted of first degree murder while armed or first degree murder were participants in a family or income support program. Of those convicted on either second degree murder while armed or second degree murder, 49 percent (53) were participants. Finally, 37 percent (34) convicted of any of the manslaughter charges were at one time participants. Of the 16 persons convicted of homicide who were at one time wards of the District or some other jurisdiction, 5 were convicted of first degree murder while armed or first degree murder;

5 were convicted of second degree murder while armed or second degree murder and 6 were convicted of some form of manslaughter.

The participation of victims in family or income support programs is relatively less than that of assailants. Thirty-two percent had either at the time of their death or historically received one of the forms of income assistance aforementioned. However, of those having received aid, an almost identical picture emerges. The majority (60 percent or 248) had collected AFDC, 43 percent (177) had received medical assistance and 6 percent (25) had been wards of the District. Furthermore, 6 percent (27) of the victims had, prior to their death, been detained in one of the city's juvenile detention facilities (Table 6).



# PATTERNS OF HOMICIDE

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

## Time

Studies indicate that certain time patterns exist concerning the incidence of crime. Findings show certain fluctuations in crime rates when time factors such as time of day, day of week and month are considered.

**Time of Day:** The peak hours in which homicides are most often committed are from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. In 1991, 57 percent of homicides occurred within this time period. Over the past 5 years, the trend has been the same, beginning in 1986 when 49 percent of homicides occurred during this time, peaking in 1989 when 67 percent of homicides occurred during these hours. Proportionately, the fewest number of homicides occurred between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

An analysis of the data in 3-hour intervals shows that homicides in 1991 most often occurred between the hours of 9 p.m. and midnight. A comparison of data over the past five years reveals that this pattern also

Table 7  
Time of Homicide  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

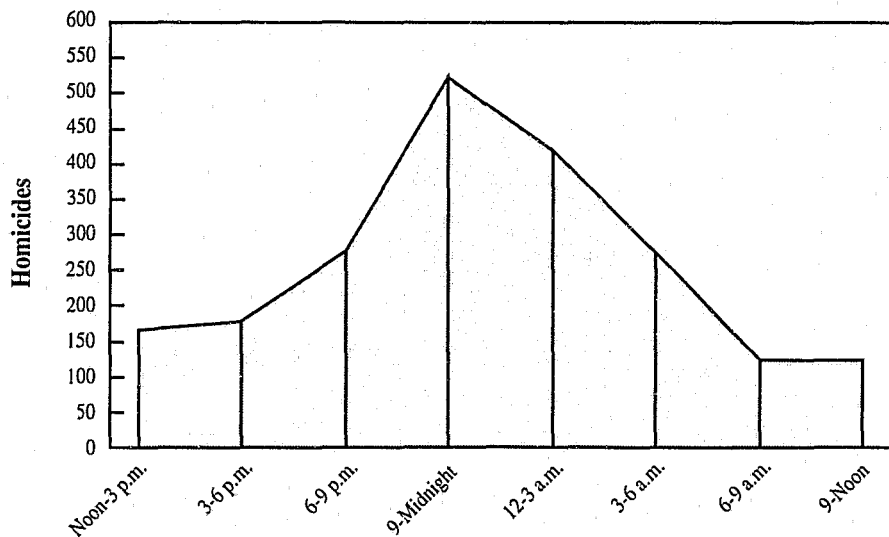
Time	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Midnight - 2:59 am	31	17	45	20	75	20	81	18	94	19	92	19
3 am - 5:59 am	30	16	18	8	58	16	51	23	61	13	57	12
6 am - 8:59 am	19	10	9	4	28	8	21	5	17	4	31	6
9 am - 11:59 am	20	11	12	5	27	7	16	4	22	5	26	5
Noon - 2:59 pm	25	14	18	8	28	8	24	5	30	6	42	9
3 pm - 5:59 pm	16	9	18	8	22	6	36	8	41	8	45	9
6 pm - 8:59 pm	13	7	27	12	50	14	68	15	55	11	65	13
9 pm - 11:59 pm	29	16	59	26	63	17	115	26	126	26	131	27
Unknown	11	6	19	8	18	5	29	7	38	8	0	0
Total	194		225		369		441*		484*		489*	

\* Figure includes homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Figure 3  
Time of Homicide  
January 1986-1991



emerged in 1987, 1989 and 1990. In 1986 and 1988, the majority of homicides occurred between midnight and 3 a.m. (Table 7, Figure 3).

**Day of Week:** There has been no definitive trend with regard to the days of the week on which homicides most often occur. Almost each day of the week has at one time represented the greatest proportion of homicidal incidents. In 1986, the greatest proportion of homicides occurred on Wednesdays (20 percent or 39), in 1987, on Sundays (20 percent or 45), in 1988, on Saturdays (20 percent or 74) and in 1989, on Mondays (17 percent or 76). In 1990, the greatest number of homicides occurred on Saturdays (21 percent or 104) and the fewest occurred on Thursdays (10 percent or 48). In 1991, the majority of homicides occurred on Tuesdays and Saturdays, each accounting for 16 percent of homicides; followed by Thursdays and Fridays, each accounting for 15 percent of all homicides. The fewest homicides occurred on Mondays, accounting for 12 percent of all homicides (Table A-3).

**Month:** Traditionally, homicides were thought to occur most frequently during summer months when temperatures are high and people are more likely to be outside interacting with others. Data for the District does not seem to support this hypothesis. The greatest number of homicides have either occurred in winter months or have been equal to summer months numerically with the exception of 1988 when the greatest number (38 or 10 percent) of homicides occurred in August. For example, in 1986, 11 percent (39) of homicides occurred in January. In 1987, 13 percent (20) of the homicides occurred in December. During 1989, January was equal to August (51 or 12 percent) and in 1990, January was tied with July (52 or 11 percent) for occurrence of the most homicides. In 1991, the majority of homicides occurred in August with 51 homicides or 10 percent. The fewest occurred in June (32 or 7 percent) (Table A-4).

### Homicide Method

The increases in homicide and violent assaults are in part attributable to the increase in the availability of firearms. Although there are ongoing efforts to pass more stringent

Table 8  
Method of Homicide  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Guns	107	55	137	61	266	72	333	77	377	78	383	78
Knives/ Sharp Instrument	38	20	46	20	46	13	57	13	62	13	67	14
Blunt Force	6	3	3	1	4	1	29	7	35	7	24	5
Other	37	19	20	9	27	7	11	3	10	2	15	3
Unknown	6	3	19	8	26	7	8	2	0	0	0	0
Total	194		225		369		434		484*		489*	

\* Figure includes homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

gun control laws, only a few states have gun control limits and the market for illegal guns is lucrative. Unless registered before 1976, possession of handguns is illegal in the District. However, the lack of such legislation in surrounding jurisdictions makes it easy for anyone to obtain a weapon.

Guns are by far the weapon of choice in the District and nationally. Based on evidence confiscated by police, nine millimeter guns are the most common. While the .38 caliber revolver is still used, a popular practice in the streets is to load magazines with 15 and 32-round capacity into 9 millimeter semi- and full-automatic weapons. This can be done easily because anyone can buy magazines over-the-counter without a license.

Since 1986, the use of firearms in homicides has increased dramatically. In 1986, 55 percent of homicides were committed with firearms. By 1991, 78 percent of homicides were the result of shootings.

Conversely, the use of a knife or other sharp instrument has steadily declined, with 20 percent of homicides resulting from injuries sustained through this method in 1986 to 13 percent in 1990. In 1991, 14

percent of homicides were the result of an object of sharp force (Table 8, Figure 4).

### Homicide Motive

Motives for homicide are classified into several categories: drugs, altercation, domestic, robbery, sex, other, and unknown. The motive of drugs refers to homicides for which drug trafficking are a direct cause of the murder as determined by the preliminary homicide investigation. Altercation as a motive refers to arguments and conflicts between people who are not related, while domestic motives include confrontations between relatives. Motives that fall into the "other" category include police shootings and accidental killings. The category for unknown includes cases for which no arrest has been made and those for which a suspect has been identified or arrested, but no additional information about the crime has been discovered or divulged.

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

during preliminary investigations, a determination of classification is made. This process is substantially hindered by the fact that one of the persons knowledgeable of critical information regarding motivation is deceased and the other participant for various reasons may be unable, unwilling or unavailable to reveal the true nature of the confrontation.

The proportion of crimes that can be directly attributed to the use and the sale of drugs has steadily decreased since its peak in 1988. In 1987, 46 percent of homicides were classified as drug-related and increased to 53 percent in 1988. In 1990, 42 percent of homicides were considered as drug-related. In 1991, drugs as a motive for homicide fell even lower to 35 percent.

Conversely, homicides that were the result of an argument have increased proportionately from 12 percent of all homicides in 1987 to 19 percent in 1990 and continued to increase slightly in 1991 to 20 percent. Homicides attributed to domestic violence decreased proportionately from 13 percent in 1987 to 6 percent in 1990 and 4 percent in 1991 (Table 9, Figure 5).

### Homicide in Wards

In 1991, the largest proportion of homicides occurred in Ward 8, accounting for 20 percent (96) of all homicides in the District. This was also the case every year since 1986 with the exception of 1988. During 1988, the majority of homicides occurred in Ward 2 with 69 homicides which was 3 more that year than in Ward 8 (Table 10).

Ward 8 has continuously led the District in terms of the highest actual number of homicides in any given ward as well as having the highest homicide rate in spite of being the second least populous ward in 1986 and the least populous in 1990. In 1986, there were 43 homicides translating to 6 homicides per 1,000 residents. Ward 1 had the next highest number and rate with 36 homicides or 5 per 1,000 residents. By 1990, homicides in Ward 8 had increased to 103 or 15 homicides per 1,000 population. Wards 5, 6 and 7 each had 9 homicides per 1,000 residents, replacing Ward 1 as having the second highest homicide rate with 70, 66 and 65 homicides respectively (Table 11, Figure 6).

Figure 4  
Method of Homicide  
Calendar Years 1986 & 1991

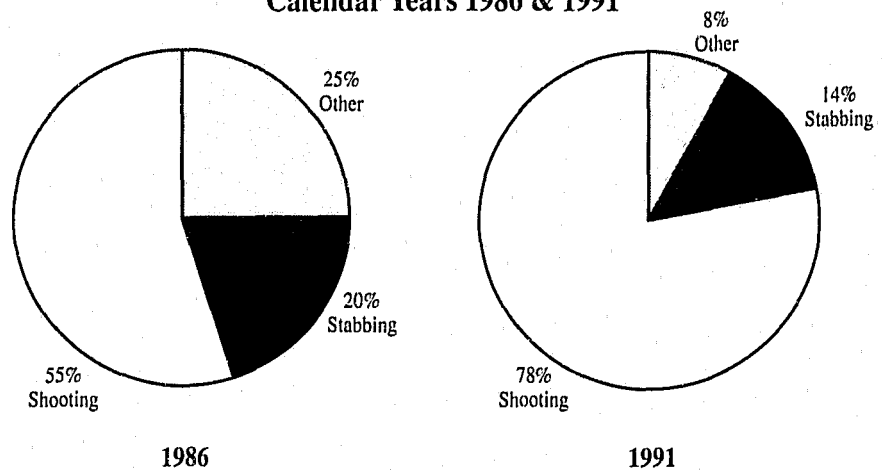


Table 9  
Homicide Motive  
Calendar Years 1987-1991

	1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Drugs	103	46	197	53	225	52	204	42	169	35
Robbery	17	8	31	8	26	6	65	13	46	9
Domestic	29	13	30	8	36	8	30	6	18	4
Argument	27	12	56	15	44	10	90	19	96	20
Sex	1	<1	5	<1	3	1	4	<1	10	2
Burglary	1	<1	7	2	3	1	3	<1	2	<1
Police Shooting	6	3	4	1	4	1	10	2	6	1
Retaliation*	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	1	65	13
Other	13	6	16	4	20	5	30	6	32	7
Unknown	28	12	23	6	69	16	43	9	45	9
Total	225		369		434		484**		489**	

\* This is a new category created in 1990 and excludes retaliation classified as drug-related.

\*\* Includes homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Between 1990 and 1991, the number of homicides committed in Ward 8 decreased slightly from 103 to 96 which lowered the homicide rate from 15 to 14 per 1,000 residents. The number of homicides also decreased in Wards 2 and 4 which in the latter case lowered the homicide rate from 8 to 7 per 1,000 residents. Conversely, the number of homicides increased in Wards 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7 resulting in an increased rate of homicide in Wards 5, 6, and 7. This increase was most pronounced in Ward 7 in which the number of homicides increased from 65 to 76, raising the rate from 9 to 11 homicides per 1,000 residents. Ward 7 had the second highest rate though it was tied numerically with Ward 5.

### Residence of Victims and Assailants

Not all homicide victims are District residents. The percentage of non-District residents slain in the District was highest in 1991 when 97 or 20 percent of victims were non-residents. In 1990, the number and percent were lower with 84 victims or 17 percent being non-residents.

The majority of victims who were not District residents were from Maryland, ranging from a high of 74 percent of non-District victims in 1988 and 1991 to a low of 61 percent in 1989. Victims reported as being residents of Virginia were the next most numerous ranging from a high of 26 percent in 1989 to a low of 6 percent in 1987. In 1991, aside from Maryland and Virginia residents slain in the District, there were 6 victims (6 percent) reportedly from New York and 4 victims from various other localities (Table A-5).

When analyzing the data according to the residence of victims, an interesting pattern emerges. In 1986 and 1987, the majority of homicide victims were District residents of Ward 8, 15 percent and 18 percent respectively). However, in 1988, victims from other states surpassed Ward 8 with the largest proportion of victims. In 1988, 15 percent of victims were from other states compared with 14 percent residing in Ward 8. This trend continued steadily and in 1991, victims from other states comprised 20 percent of all victims compared with the next largest proportion

Figure 5  
Homicide Motive  
Calendar Years 1987- 1991

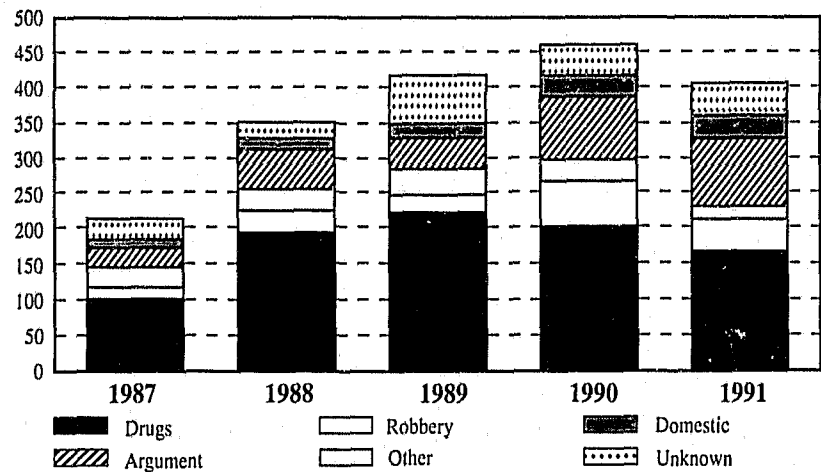


Table 10  
Homicides in Wards  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ward 1	36	19	32	14	50	14	57	13	61	13	63	13
Ward 2	31	16	35	16	69	19	52	12	68	14	56	11
Ward 3	5	3	2	<1	0	0	1	<1	2	<1	3	1
Ward 4	3	2	18	8	21	6	32	7	41	8	38	8
Ward 5	21	11	28	12	51	14	73	17	70	14	76	16
Ward 6	26	13	28	12	52	14	61	14	66	14	74	15
Ward 7	29	15	29	13	51	14	67	15	65	13	76	16
Ward 8	43	22	50	22	66	18	93	21	103	21	96	20
Unknown	—	—	3	1	12	3	5	1	8	1	7	1
Total	194		225		372*		441*		484*		489*	

\* Includes homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

which indicated Ward 5. Since 1987, Ward 5 and Ward 8 have alternated with having the second and third largest proportions of victims as residents.(Table A-6).

Within the District, females are much more likely to be slain in or near their homes than are males. The data reveal that the percentage of females slain within the census tract of their residence ranged from a high of 81 percent in 1988 to a low of 43 percent in 1991. For males, the percentages are much lower ranging from a low of 32 percent each in 1987 and 1989, to a high of 46 percent in 1986 (Table A-7).

For victims who were slain inside their place of residence, the figures are even more compelling when analyzed by gender. Although the percentages have been decreasing, of those females slain within their census tract of residence, in 1986, 96 percent were either at home or within the immediate vicinity of their home. By 1990, the percentage had decreased to 77 percent, which is still higher than the highest percentage for males (70 percent in 1986). As was the case with females, the percentage for males has been steadily decreasing and by 1990, 42 percent of those slain within the census tract of their residence were actually at home or in the immediate vicinity of their home. Data for 1991 show that 43 percent of females compared to 34 percent of males were slain in the census tract of their residence. Of this group, 85 percent of females and 42 percent of males were slain in the building of their residence.

The percentage of adults residing in the District at the time of arrest was lowest in 1986 and peaked in 1990. In 1990, 85 percent of adults arrested for homicide were District residents, with 8 percent residing in Maryland, 2 percent in Virginia and the remaining 5 percent from other areas.

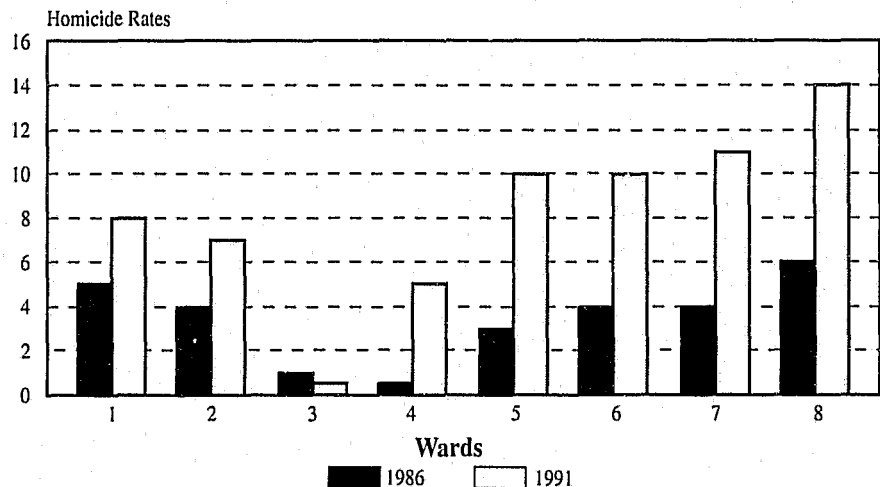
As of June 30, 1991, 82 percent of adults arrested for homicide were District residents, 12 percent were Maryland residents, 2 percent were from Virginia and the remaining 4 percent were from other areas (Table A-8).

Table 11  
Population Estimates, Number and Rate per 1,000 Residents  
of Homicides in Wards\*  
Calendar Years 1986 & 1991

Ward	1986		Ward	1991			
	Population Estimate*	Number of Homicides		Population Estimate*	Number of Homicides		
1	Total	78,400	36	1	Total	79,729	63
	Rate		5		Rate		8
2	Total	82,500	31	2	Total	81,638	56
	Rate		4		Rate		7
3	Total	76,400	5	3	Total	83,204	3
	Rate		1		Rate		<1
4	Total	80,500	3	4	Total	78,425	38
	Rate		<1		Rate		5
5	Total	81,500	21	5	Total	75,054	76
	Rate		3		Rate		10
6	Total	74,200	26	6	Total	70,669	74
	Rate		4		Rate		10
7	Total	79,900	29	7	Total	69,312	76
	Rate		4		Rate		11
8	Total	75,100	43	8	Total	68,869	96
	Rate		6		Rate		14

\* As reported in the D.C. Office of Policy's Indices for 1988 and 1991.  
Source: Metropolitan Police Department.  
Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Figure 6  
Ward Homicide Rates  
Calendar Years 1986 & 1991



# PROCESSING HOMICIDE CASES

**T**he rising number of homicide cases during the past several years has placed serious and substantial strain on the District's criminal justice system. This system was already burdened with the effects of enforcing substance abuse laws during the mid and late 1980s. To measure the impact that these cases have had on the system, OCJPA asked the Pretrial Services Agency (PSA) to conduct a study of homicide case processing during a five-year period.

The following is an analysis of arrests, pretrial status, case dispositions and processing times of individuals charged with various types of homicide. Using the computerized files of the PSA, this analysis examines every homicide case filed from 1986 through 1990. Of the 1,178 cases, 938 had reached final disposition as of June 30, 1991.

The analysis begins by looking at the number of homicide arrests that resulted in case filings with the court and examines pretrial release and detention. Twenty years ago, the District of Columbia was the first jurisdiction in the nation to adopt a preventive detention statute. This law permits judges to consider community safety at the defendant's first appearance and to detain

without bond certain "dangerous" or "violent" individuals after a number of procedural safeguards are met. Amendments dealing specifically with defendants charged with first degree murder were added in 1982. The report examines how these laws are being used, how many murder defendants are detained under these laws compared with those detained because they cannot pay the bondsman's fee, and how many are released on supervised conditions compared with those released after payment of a bond.

The next segment of this section examines case processing times, how long individuals charged with murder have to wait until their trial, how much time elapses from arrest to indictment and from arrest to final disposition and whether or not the statutory time limits applicable to defendants held pursuant to the preventive detention statute are observed. It is important to note that the closed status for cases in this analysis is reached at the point of final disposition by the court and is not to be confused with the police department's definition of closure which refers to the point at which an arrest is made.

## Case Disposition

Between 1986 and 1990, 1,696 deaths were classified as homicides. An examination of case filings and dispositions reveals 1,178 homicide cases were filed in court during this time. Stated another way, of all the reported homicides, 69 percent resulted in an arrest and subsequent case filing. A yearly breakdown of these figures reveals significant differences over the five years. In 1986, there were 194 reported homicides, and 145 cases filed during the same period translating to 75 arrests resulting in case filings for every 100 homicides. In 1990, there were 474 murders committed, and 178 cases filed for homicide, indicating that there were 38 arrests that led to cases filed for every 100 homicides reported in 1990.

In considering this data, however, it should be noted that a case filing refers to one homicide incident and not necessarily one person. In other words, one incident that results in multiple homicides is considered as one case, while one person who is responsible for multiple homicides that occurred at different times is reflected as a case filed for each homicide. Also, this analysis includes all homicide cases, both open and closed, and those that were dismissed and then reopened to be re-prosecuted. Therefore, the rate of 38 arrests for 100 homicides in 1990 may be misleadingly low since, during that period, some arrests may have been for multiple homicides and, at the same time, some of the arrestees may have committed other homicides for which they were not charged. Also, the homicides included in this analysis were tracked from the time they were filed as opposed to the time they occurred. Thus, cases for 1986 may reflect homicides that actually occurred in earlier years, but were resolved by the police in 1986. Similarly, for homicides that occurred in 1990, arrests may have been made in 1991.

Focusing now on homicide cases filed with the courts, of the 938 homicide cases that reached disposition during the five-year period, 491 or 52 percent resulted in convictions for some charge - often a less serious charge. Conversely, there was no finding of guilt in 447 cases, or 48 percent of the total cases filed (Table 12, Figure 7). All of the foregoing is based on an analysis of cases that reached disposition by the Court. Since 166 homicide cases filed in 1990 were still open as of June 30, 1991, these rates could still change.

A yearly analysis of the same data reveals significant differences. In 1986, for example, the conviction rate was 65 percent, with no finding of guilt in the remaining 35 percent. By 1990, these rates had reversed: 62 of the 178 homicide cases resulted in a conviction, for a 35 percent conviction rate. One hundred sixteen cases or 65 percent reached final disposition without a finding of guilt (Tables A-9 through A-13).

Of the 447 homicide cases that were closed without a finding of guilt, the overwhelming majority (311 or 70 percent) were closed following a dismissal from the U.S. Attorney's office. Another 65 cases (15 percent) were found not guilty. Four more cases were found not guilty by reason of insanity, and in three cases, the defendants were determined incompetent to stand trial (Figure 7). Other dispositions that fall into the "no finding of guilt" category are nolle prosequi, grand jury abatement, dropped for want of prosecution, acquitted, consolidated with another case and miscellaneous dispositions.

Cases dismissed for want of prosecution or dismissed without prejudice were observed at a steadily increasing frequency over the years of this study. The rate rose from a low of 23 percent of all homicide arrests in 1986 to a high of 56 percent in 1990.

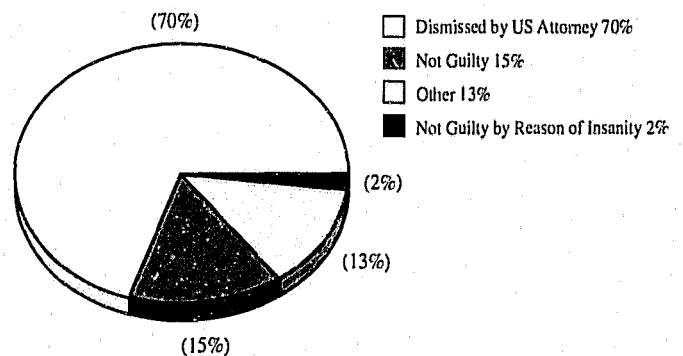
Approximately half (52 percent) of the homicide cases filed from 1986 to 1991 resulted in a conviction. When examining the manner in which the conviction was obtained, of the 491 cases (out of the 938 closed cases analyzed) where guilt was established, 34 percent (167) pled to a lesser included offense; that is, an offense less serious than the original charge, but containing many of the same elements of the crime. (For example, first degree murder would be a lesser included offense of the charge of first degree murder while armed.) There was a finding of guilt, either by plea or Bench trial, for another 149 cases (30 percent) and 175 cases (36 percent) were found guilty by jury verdicts (Tables A-9 through A-13).

Table 12  
Outcome of Homicide Cases Reaching Disposition\*  
Calendar Years 1986-1990

	Murder I w/a	Murder I	Murder II w/a	Murder II	Man- slaughter	Other Charges	Totals
Total Cases Processed	349	99	307	46	17	120	938
Indicted	284	20	184	23	48	107	666
Indicted on							
Arrest Charge	159	10	121	4	4	28	326
Indicted from							
Other Charges	125	10	63	19	44	79	340
No Finding of Guilt	170	37	171	24	11	34	447
Convicted	179	62	136	22	6	86	491
Convicted on							
Arrest Charge	56	6	33	3	3	35	136
Convicted on							
Higher Charge	0	16	3	3	1	51	74
Convicted on							
Lesser Charge	123	40	100	16	2	0	281

\* Table excludes open cases.  
Source: Pretrial Services Agency.  
Prepared by: Pretrial Services Agency.

Figure 7  
Cases Closed Without Finding of Guilt



## Pretrial Release and Detention

Individuals charged with criminal offenses must be presented to a judicial officer promptly after arrest. The purpose of this first appearance is to determine whether or not and under what conditions the defendant is to be released, and to set the date for the next hearing. Depending upon the circumstances of the case, the prior criminal record and the position of the U.S. Attorney, judicial officers have several options under the law: to release on personal recognizance or conditional release; to set a monetary bond; to hold the defendant for a preventive detention hearing; or, in the case of defendants charged with first degree murder, to simply hold the defendant without bond.

Under District law, defendants charged with any offense other than first degree murder must be released on personal recognizance unless the judicial officer determines such release will not reasonably assure the appearance of the person in court or the safety of any other person or the community (D.C. Code 23-1321). When such a determination is made, the judicial officer may then set conditions that will assure the appearance of the person for trial or the safety of any other person or the community.

The District statute also contains procedures for holding certain defendants under preventive detention (D.C. Code 23-1322). Defendants ordered detained under this section of the law must be brought to trial within 60 days, with a 30-day extension permitted upon the request of the U.S. Attorney for "good cause shown" (D.C. Code 23-1322[d][4]). Defendants charged with first degree murder may be ordered detained without bond under a separate section of the D.C. Code (D.C. Code 23-1325). Defendants held under this section of the Code are not subject to statutory time limits regarding time to trial.

Finally, judicial officers may set financial conditions of release (money bonds) if such conditions are believed necessary to assure the defendant's appearance in court. The law prohibits the setting of financial conditions of release for the purpose of protecting community safety (D.C. Code 23-1321[a]).

An examination of the initial release decision (including open and closed cases) reveals that 15 percent of homicide defendants were released on non-financial conditions. Thirty two percent had some form of money bond set and 34 percent were held without bond pursuant to a statutory stipulation that applies only to defendants charged with first degree murder (D.C. Code 23-1325). An additional 7 percent were detained after a preventive detention hearing and 12 percent had other forms of holds or release actions.

When examining the type of initial release as it relates to specific charges, there are significant differences across the spectrum of homicide cases. For example, the majority of first degree murder cases (including Murder I While Armed) were held without bond. There were 581 cases in this category, and 342 or 59 percent were detained at the initial appearance. Bonds were set in 117 cases, constituting 20 percent of the cases in this category. Thirty cases were released on non-financial or supervised release, and 73 were held for a preventive detention hearing. Nineteen additional cases were held under temporary holds or had other release dispositions.

Release decisions for persons charged with second degree murder (and second degree murder while armed) reveal a different picture. Defendants in this charge category are not eligible to be detained without bond, but may be eligible for a detention hearing, depending on the nature of the prior criminal record and whether or not the U.S. Attorney requests such a hearing. There were 353 cases brought to court with an initial charge of second degree murder. Of these, the most common judicial action at the initial appearance was the imposition of a money bond - 237 cases or 56 percent. Another 120 cases, or 28 percent, were

released on some form of conditional or non-financial release. Only three cases (less than 1 percent) were held for a detention hearing, and another 32 or 9 percent of cases were held pursuant to one of the temporary hold provisions applicable for defendants already under some form of supervised release.

When looking at actions subsequent to the initial release, given that there may be missing data in the area of bond posting information, preliminary figures indicate that in almost two out of every three cases where a monetary bond was imposed, the defendant was never able to raise funds to secure release. Conversely, even high bonds, some in excess of \$150,000, were sometimes posted very quickly after being imposed.

Questions are frequently raised regarding the effectiveness of various forms of release in assuring a defendant's appearance in court. Again, with the qualification that the data set may be incomplete in the area of money bonds posted and subsequent changes in the release status, the following picture emerges. At least 157 defendants charged with homicide posted money bonds. The data indicate that a total of 29 bench warrants were issued for defendants on financial release. The data also reveal that 261 homicide defendants were released on non-financial conditions. Among these cases, 20 warrants were issued for a failure to appear.

The issuance of a bench warrant does not necessarily represent a willful decision to flee or avoid prosecution. Many failures to appear result from legitimate and verifiable excuses and can be resolved quickly. Thus, a better measure of the fugitivity rate is the number of bench warrants that remain outstanding for a considerable length of time. The data show that, of all defendants in this study that were released on non-financial conditions of release, only one bench warrant remained outstanding as of June 30, 1991. Of all defendants on financial release, 7 still had outstanding bench warrants as of June 30, 1991. Thus, on the question of the relative effectiveness of financial conditions of release (money bonds) versus non-financial conditions of release (supervised release),



the data suggest two possibilities: that supervised release is more effective in assuring the defendant's return to court or, to the contrary, that, in making pretrial release determinations, the court is accurately assessing, under the current statutory framework, which defendants do not need financial conditions to ensure their return for future court appearances. The data do not suggest that the defendants for whom financial conditions were imposed would return to court at a similarly successful rate if such conditions were not imposed upon them.

### Processing Time

This section discusses the time that elapsed while homicide cases are processed through the system from arrest to Grand Jury indictment and from arrest to final disposition.

**Arrest to Indictment:** Homicide case data from 1986 to 1990 reveal considerable delays from arrest to indictment. Of all homicide cases, only 30 percent were indicted within 90 days of arrest. Only 65 percent were indicted within 180 days of arrest.

**Arrest to Final Disposition:** The majority of homicide cases (60 percent) reached disposition within one year. However, this figure includes a substantial number of cases that were either dismissed for want of prosecution or otherwise closed without a finding of guilt. Considering only cases where guilt was eventually established, among cases that were resolved by a jury trial, 74 percent took more than one year to reach final disposition. Cases involving a plea were resolved somewhat more quickly — 58 percent took longer than one year. Among the cases where the defendant was ultimately acquitted (found not guilty), 63 percent took longer than one year to reach final disposition.

The time-to-disposition data was also analyzed by type of release. Looking first at the time period from arrest to indictment, defendants with a monetary bond appear to proceed more rapidly than do defendants released on non-financial conditions or defendants held without bond. Among homicide defendants for whom a money bond was set, 76 percent were indicted within six months of arrest. Among those released on conditions, 69 percent were indicted within six months. Finally, among those either held without bond or those held after a preventive detention hearing, only 57 percent were indicted within six months. From this data, it is unclear why defendants held after a preventive detention hearing remained in jail longer than the 90-day statutory time limit; however, it should be noted that first degree murder defendants are preventively detained pursuant to a statutory code (D.C. Code 23-1325(a)) that does not contain the 90-day provision.

With regard to the time from arrest to final disposition, among homicide defendants with a monetary bond, 36 percent of the cases were still pending after one year. Among defendants granted some form of non-financial or supervised release, 38 percent of the cases were still open after one year. Finally, among those held after a preventive detention hearing or held without bond, 45 percent were still pending after one year.

These findings suggest that the impact of the rising number of homicide cases has been a significant lengthening of processing times and an increasing number of dispositions through dismissals. While the actual number of homicide cases might not have been overwhelming, it is important to note that they are the most serious cases in the system, requiring the heaviest investment of systemic resources. Therefore, a significant increase in their number places a disproportionate drain on those resources and a heavy impact on the process.

### Conclusions

While this analysis offers insight to one facet of the homicide problem, there are necessarily limits to the conclusions that can be drawn from case disposition data. This data cannot reveal anything about the underlying facts and circumstances of the cases and cannot address the practical difficulties of finding witnesses, securing testimony and bringing cases to trial. Conclusions drawn from this data also cannot address why two thirds of these cases were dismissed and why there was a tremendous change between 1986 and 1990 in the number of persons prosecuted for homicide. This data can, however, help to alert people as to what areas of this problem warrant attention and further examination.

To determine specific factors that have caused the lengthening of processing times and the larger number of dismissals in homicide cases, OCJPA will conduct a follow-up study the purpose of which will be to develop a set of strategies to reverse these trends.

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This analysis was conducted and prepared by Kathy Reade Boyer, Jay Carver and Ron Hickey of the Pretrial Services Agency. Case docket numbers and final disposition information are available from the Pretrial Services Agency for further study.

# INVESTIGATING HOMICIDES

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

## The Police Department

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

The District's police homicide detectives are trained in all of the proven traditional techniques of detection and investigation and have ongoing training in the technological advances in solving homicides. They are trained in how to interview and interrogate, perform crime scene investigation, gather and process evidence, obtain latent prints, and conduct ballistics and polygraph tests. They must also have an understanding of forensic

pathology. The detective assigned to a particular case watches the autopsy and the Mobile Crime Unit goes to the Medical Examiner's Office to conduct further forensic investigations including blood and hair tests, genetic mapping, fingerprinting, bullet recovery and clothing examination.

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

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

## The Medical Examiner

The Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) is also responsible for examining the scene where the body is located. The Autopsy Technician Unit is called to the scene along with the police to investigate. While police

investigators may focus more on circumstances surrounding the incident and clues possibly linked with the assailant, autopsy technicians look for identification marks on the body, the number and types of wounds, and other victim-related information. Once investigators record the details of the scene, autopsy technicians remove the body, or remains of the body, from the scene to the MEO.

Regardless of the condition of a body, every homicide victim undergoes an autopsy. An autopsy is a process by which a medical doctor trained in forensic pathology internally and externally examines the body to reveal the actual cause of death and other information that will provide evidence and clues to the homicide act itself. After the medical examiner's report of what was found inside and on the victim is filed, the body is released to the family. The process usually takes no longer than 48 hours.

## The U.S. Attorney

The U.S. Attorney's Office is first involved with a District homicide when the MPD presents a warrant affidavit for approval. If a homicide is believed to be a first degree murder, referral is made to the Felony Trial Division. If a homicide is believed to be a second degree murder, voluntary or involuntary manslaughter, it is referred to the Grand Jury Division. Negligent homicide cases are referred to the Grand Jury Division after indictment.

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

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

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

### Closing Cases

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a homicide case is considered closed when at least one person is arrested, charged with the commission of the murder and turned over to the court for prosecution. Several homicides may be closed by the arrest of one person while the arrest of several people may close only one homicide case. By December 31, 1991, 80 percent of homicides that occurred in 1986 had been closed, 62 percent of those committed in 1987, 58 percent of those committed in 1988, 64 percent of those committed in 1989, 65 percent of those committed in 1990 and 54 percent of those committed in 1991.

The dramatic change in the types of homicides occurring in the District in recent years has had an impact on the rate at which cases have been closed. A large proportion of homicides currently result from drug trafficking. In these types of cases, victims are often killed by executioners and links between victims and other circumstances and possible suspects are difficult to establish. These killers are often murdered themselves before they can be apprehended. Witnesses to these offenses are often few in number and difficult to locate and their credibility is often suspect. Sometimes these witnesses are killed themselves before they are able to testify. The reasons for which many murders are committed have also become more insubstantial, thus making the traditional investigative approach of focusing on the perpetrator's motive less fruitful in solving homicides.

In response to increases in the number of homicides, the MPD, the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office have increased resources devoted to investigating, processing and solving homicide cases. Beginning in December 1991, through a cooperative effort between the MPD and the FBI, the number of homicide investigators was doubled from 55 to 110. Also, the number of Superior Court judges presiding over felony I cases was increased in 1989 by 67 percent, enhancing the ability of the criminal justice system to process homicide cases.

# HOMICIDE AMONG YOUTH: A PROFILE OF THOUGHT

**A** great deal of information is available regarding profiles of juveniles involved in homicide and violent crime and their association to the drug trade. This information, however, is primarily statistical. There is some research available as well as theorizing and speculation about the causes that predispose youth to criminal activity and drug involvement. However, among the information available, there is little that has as its source the youth themselves and their thoughts and explanations about what they do and why.

The following is a brief report that is based on the insights gleaned from individual interviews with each of the 19 youth serving commitments for homicide at Oak Hill Youth Center, the District's juvenile secure detention facility, during June and July of 1991. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight to how these youth perceive their lives and behavior. These youth were asked by the interviewer 75 questions and engaged in less structured conversation about topics ranging from the circumstances of the crime for which they are incarcerated to whether or not they think life is worth living. The information presented in this section is self-reported and the names of the youth have been changed to protect their privacy. While these accounts are relatively few, it is important to keep in mind that these youth and their thoughts reflect many more than just themselves.

These youth were asked about their socioeconomic conditions, their families, how well they perform in school, whether or not and which parent was present in the home and a range of other sociodemographic questions. However, the focus of the interviews was questions that sought insight

to their thought processes, their judgement and reasoning, their perceptions of past and future and their understanding of the responsibility and role they have in their self-determination.

The typical sociodemographic profile of District youth involved in the juvenile justice system applies to the youth in this study. Their character profile reveals some insights that are not typically known. They have little understanding of alternatives to their actions and are not interested in changing their lifestyles or behavior or the probable course of their lives. They seem not to have a sense of remorse for the murders they have committed and accept the certainty of a very dismal and limited future.

The range of topics addressed in these interviews was too variant to condense into a brief discussion for the purposes of this report. The findings, however, can be covered through representation in several themes that emerged in the interviews. Some of the findings are expected, some are surprising and all evoke a compelling sense of concern and urgency about the factors leading these youth to commit the crimes for which they are committed. And, while these youth gave many answers to countless questions, their responses led to more questions that need to be answered in order to better understand and address the crisis in which these youth find themselves.

## A Profile

There were nineteen youth serving commitments for homicide during the interview period. One declined to be interviewed and one who agreed to be interviewed said he is not guilty of the homicide with which he is charged. The seventeen that were interviewed fit the typical sociodemographic profile of juvenile offenders in the District. All are black males and all had been involved in the juvenile

justice system prior to their arrest for homicide. Eight were first arrested at age 12 or 13 and four at age 14 or 15. At the time of the homicide, seven were age 15 and five were age 14. Eight of the 17 said they were in school at the time, but did not attend regularly and the others were not attending at all. Nine had completed seventh or eighth grade, six had completed ninth or tenth grade and one had completed eleventh grade.

All of them have seen violence as a regular part of their environment from witnessing robberies and brutal beatings to seeing people killed. Fourteen said they have been victims themselves of a range of violence including robberies, shootings, stabbings and beatings.

The homicides with which they were charged also fit a typical profile. Of the 17 interviewed, 11 were committed for first degree murder, four for second degree murder and two for manslaughter. Among them, they are charged with having killed 22 people. Nineteen were killed with guns, two with knives and one with hands. Twelve of the killings are considered by the youth to have been drug-related.

Their family situations also reveal concurrence with a typical profile. When asked, "Who raised you?" nine said their mother, three said their grandmother, three said both parents, one said an aunt and two said they raised themselves. Five of these youth had children - a few had more than one child. Thirteen said they had relatives in prison - most of these had several immediate relatives that were incarcerated.

With regard to violence at home, six of the youth were exposed to physical domestic violence among family members and 12 say that they received disciplinary beatings, but felt that these beatings were justified.

Like all teenagers, they like movies and music. When asked what their three favorite movies are, eight listed for all three choices movies that feature excessive violence and killing and four youth listed these movies for two of their choices. For music choices, the majority mentioned rap groups as their favorites with about half mentioned rap artists whose songs are commonly distinguished for their violent and antisocial messages.

### The Drug Trade

The first common theme among these youth is their involvement in drugs. All of them said when asked that they did not use drugs; but, while not all of their homicide convictions were classified as drug-related, all but one of the youth stated they sold drugs. Research repeatedly has shown that involvement in the drug trade is likely to lead to being a victim or perpetrator of homicide. This association was affirmed by this group.

General perception seems to be that youth get involved in the drug trade because they need money and want to participate in mainstream behavior and privileges that they see among the affluent and celebrities, in the movies and on television. Tariq said he got involved for the money because his family could not afford the things he wanted. Indeed, Tariq's reasons are prevalent, but for several of these youth, their involvement had little to do with the desire for money or a "piece of the American pie".

Devon said that he did not have to get involved in the drug trade for money because he got anything he wanted from his family. He did it because it was fun and he wanted the camaraderie that he perceived existed among people involved in the drug trade. Keith also said that he did not need the money and that his mother got him anything he wanted. At age 14, Keith associated with people in their twenties and thirties and wanted to do what they were doing. He said "life was fun" and he "just wanted to be a part of it."

Interestingly, all of the youth mentioned their involvement in drugs as if it was a foregone conclusion for their lives. And, there seemed to be little thought

regarding whether or not there was something else in which to get involved. Stan explained that people get so preoccupied with making more and more money that they never stop to think of the reasons or the consequences. He said he knew he would get locked up one day, but in the mean time, was consumed with wanting to see how much he could make before getting caught. "You never sit down to think," he said, "You're always on the fast track."

### Alternatives

In questioning what brought these youth to decide to kill, an absence of the recognition of alternatives is another theme that emerged. Is it thoughtlessness or ignorance that brought these youth to decide to kill? Are they incapable of observing and interpreting the world and recognizing available alternatives or are they so unexposed that they simply cannot conceive of alternatives? All, but one of these youth, when asked why they killed, answered simply that they did what they had to do.

If one says he *has to* do something, it implies that he has no alternative, but to do this. The youth were asked whether or not they thought they had another alternative to killing. The range of alternatives of which they were aware were hopelessly limited for they apparently saw only two alternatives. Virtually all of these youth summarized their alternatives with remarks tantamount to "kill or be killed."

*Had to* is interpreted in a few ways by these youth. First, they had the belief of their respective situations that, if they did not kill the victims, they would have been killed by the victims. So, their response was the only possible one if they were to preserve their own lives. The threat to their lives was not always an immediate one. Almost all believed that letting his victim live would result in that person coming back to kill him at another time. So, rather than gamble that this may or may not be the case, they brought finality to this uncertainty by killing the victims.

The other issue that bares on the perception of *having to* kill someone is that of one's reputation. All, but one of the youth

interviewed was involved in the drug trade and all of these carried guns for protection. Several of the youth killed as a result of robberies for drugs or drug money, or were engaged in an effort to collect drug money owed. Being robbed or having someone not pay a debt, whether drug-related or not, was perceived as reflecting negatively on one's reputation and having implications beyond that one incident. These youth were keenly aware of the significance of one's reputation and the ramifications of allowing a precedent to be set by letting a robbery or unpaid debt go unchallenged. Killing, in this case, was still for the purpose of self-preservation. The youth believed that allowing someone to rob him or not pay a debt to him is the same thing as announcing that he is a person who should be robbed and taken advantage of in the future. They considered killing as the ultimate message to others that they will not get away with being disrespected or robbed.

If they see their alternatives to be as limited as this, what do they understand about their choices? Once the available alternatives are recognized and reviewed, one chooses the alternative that is most appealing and beneficial. The question then becomes, what do these youth realize about the alternatives available to them and the implications of their choices? If a youth chooses to kill, then he risks retaliation from the victim's friends or relatives which will most likely take the form of being killed. If he chooses not to kill, he risks retaliation for being attacked or threatened from the victim which is very likely to take the form of being killed. So, the alternatives of killing or being killed are essentially the same and whether a youth chooses to kill or not becomes irrelevant since the outcome in the subculture in which he operates is likely to be the same. When asked if he wanted to kill or felt he had to, each invariably responded that he did not want to kill, but felt he had no choice.

Why do these youth not see that there are countless other alternatives to killing or being killed? Further questioning revealed that these youth really do not have an understanding of the concept of alternatives. When asked what he considered as an alternative to killing his victim, Scott said he supposes that he could have shot him once

instead of six times. William answered with certainty that he had other alternatives and then explained that he could have burned or stabbed his victim to death instead of shooting him. David said that he could have had his victim, who owed him money, beaten up, but, then, David still would not have gotten his money. For David, the question was not "why kill the victim," but rather "why not?"

Ronnie is the only one who recognized alternatives to killing his victim. His situation, however, did not fit the typical scenario of the others in that it he said it was not drug-related and involved coming to the defense of family member. He said that after he did it, he thought of other choices he could have made. There is something to be said for this, albeit in retrospect, considering that most of the others still did not see any alternatives.

### Lessons Learned

People make mistakes. They choose from the alternatives they know and sometimes find later that another alternative would have been a better choice. Given the same situation again, most people usually opt for what they then know to be the better choice. What use do these youth make of their opportunity to review alternatives and reconsider their choices?

Of those committed for first or second degree murder, there is only Keith, when asked if he would kill again, immediately and adamantly answered, "No." All the others paused and answered with resignation that they would do it again if they had to. Virtually all of these youth believed they did what they had to do, that there was no alternative to consider and, given the same situation, they probably would do the same thing again.

James, who shot someone for attempting to rob him, stated that he "had to kill him or people would have thought I was soft." He said that he killed his victim because "there was no other way to handle the situation." In revealing his reasoning, he carefully explained that he does not believe

in robbery so he could not rob his victim for revenge and, if he had robbed in revenge, this would have started a volley of retaliations until someone got killed. So, he said, he "just ended it before it started" and concluded by emphasizing that "robbery is wrong."

Even Scott, who regretted that he killed someone and said that he has learned at Oak Hill how to be positive and responsible and productive, still said he would do the same thing again if faced with the same situation. His hope for his future is that he will not get into the same situation again. He stated with certainty, however, like the majority of youth interviewed, that, when he is released, he will carry a gun again for protection.

Gene regretted having killed another black man and perpetuating the cycle of black-on-black killing. He claimed to have learned at Oak Hill respect and pride in being a black man and knows now that being at Oak Hill is not "cool" as it is perceived to be on the streets. Yet, with all these realizations, he "can't say" he won't sell drugs again and said that he will kill again if he *had to*.

Stan considered the crime for which he was committed as "stupid." Stan shot a man after the man tried to attack and rob him. He realized later that, had he let the robber take the money, he could have replaced it with little effort. Instead, he is serving a two-year sentence for killing him. Yet, he still said he might kill someone again if the circumstances dictate this.

Tariq said that if he only beat him up, the victim "would have come back to kill him." If there is a reason or if he is faced with the same situation, Tariq said he would make the same choice to kill. Derek could only say that he "doesn't know" if he'll kill someone again.

Not to cast a completely dismal and hopeless shadow, there are a few youth whose afterthought brought them to more positive conclusions. David conceded that being incarcerated made his crime not worth it. He said that he would not kill someone again, even if the same situation arose again. Ronnie, who has a manslaughter charge,

also said he would not kill someone again. He killed a man who attacked a family member and recognized in afterthought that he could have exercised another alternative.

Keith, who adamantly and immediately answered that he would not kill someone again, was alone in this attitude. Keith is incarcerated for committing two murders resulting from drug-related robbery attempts. He said that these crimes hurt him a lot and that he will never do anything that will result in his being institutionalized again. Unlike the majority of others interviewed, he said that this situation would not happen again and, given the same situation, he would let the robber have what he wanted.

The question of whether or not they would kill again is somewhat moot with many of these youth. The startling fact is that several of these youth were committed for more than one homicide and many claim that they have committed more than the one(s) for which they were arrested and convicted. And, while some of these youth only said they will kill again if a situation warranted this, a few said outright that there are people whom they plan to kill when released.

After killing a man to avenge the attempted murder of a friend, Edmond said he went home to change his clothes and planned to go out to kill the two partners of his victim. He knew his victims' associates would want to kill him, so Edmond simply wanted to prevent them from striking first. He was arrested on his way out to find them.

William said that his first order of business when he leaves Oak Hill is to kill the person who shot him. He knows that he may return to Oak Hill as a result, but believes that he will only get a two-year sentence and does not consider this "any time." In reality, however, for any future offenses, he would be old enough to be prosecuted as an adult and would likely receive a much longer sentence.

### Guilt and Remorse

All of these youth are incarcerated because they have been found guilty of committing homicide. All, but one of them admitted to having killed the person(s) for

which they have been charged. Yet, only a few considered themselves as truly guilty. And, most took issue with being charged with first degree murder instead of manslaughter for reasons of self-defense.

These youth did not perceive guilt in the moral sense. They considered themselves guilty because the court adjudicated them as such, not because they killed someone and see that as morally reprehensible. Even those who admitted openly that they killed someone or several people did not necessarily consider themselves guilty. Several believed they should have been found not guilty because there were no credible witnesses or the evidence was not strong enough, by their estimation. So, their perception of guilt was not related to whether or not they killed, but the fact that they did not get away with the crime. Had they not been apprehended, they would have considered themselves not guilty.

Another concept they did not seem to grasp is that of premeditated murder. Of the fifteen who had first or second degree murder charges, only William said he deliberately planned to kill his victim and that he confronted the person with the intent of killing him. The others considered their situations to be self-defense. Although all of these youth carried guns, they did not have any particular plan to use them, and, therefore, did not see their crime as premeditated. They said that they had them "in case." The notion that if one carries a gun, he then has the intent of possibly using it is a point of contention for these youth.

Devon, who fatally stabbed a man who would not return his drugs to him, was charged with second degree murder and committed for two years. Devon felt that his trial and sentence were not fair. He claimed that he should have been found not guilty because no one saw the stabbing and, therefore, his trial was based on hearsay testimony. He acknowledged that he committed the crime, but, since no one saw him do it, he felt that should not have been convicted. Rather, he thought that he should have been sent somewhere other than Oak Hill where he could be "rehabilitated" rather than punished, which he felt was the case at Oak Hill.

James and Terrence felt that their cases should have been dismissed since they believed that the evidence against them was insufficient. Edmond was certain that his charges would have been dropped if he had had a trial by jury. Derek insisted that he is "not guilty 'cause people didn't really see me." He did admit, however, that he committed the murder.

Their inability to perceive their own moral guilt prevents any sense of remorse for their crime and sympathy for their victims. These youth did not seem to be in touch with such emotions or thoughts. They regretted having killed someone insofar as the incidents have inconvenienced them, taken them from their neighborhoods and families, made them have to endure a place like Oak Hill. William was concerned that being at Oak Hill would allow people to forget about him and this bothered him. Terrence is "upset" that he is incarcerated "because it took a lot of my life." They do not seem to exist beyond their own needs and they do not seem to perceive the world other than in its immediate impact on them.

In fact, most did not consider homicide as the worst crime. Each youth was asked, "Do you think there is a crime worse than what you did?" For several, the words "what you did" were not interpreted in terms of committing a homicide, but as how a homicide is committed. William said, for instance, to beat or burn someone to death is worse than shooting him and David said that "chopping someone's head off is worse" than what he did. So, the suffering inflicted by the assailant determines whether or not and to what degree the crime is bad.

Scott and Gene considered child molesting and rape worse than homicide. Tariq said decisively that robbery is worse than what he did. Keith felt that no one deserves to be killed while David felt that someone who harms a family member does. James said that selling drugs to pregnant women and lying in court is worse than homicide. He added that no one deserves to be killed, "but they ask for it by what they do. If everyone abided by the rules of the drug trade, then everything would be OK."

When asked how they felt about killing someone or if they ever think about the victims' family, most responded that they felt nothing and have no thoughts about the families. Tariq said that he did not care about his victim because, if he were the one who got killed, his killer would not think about his family. Terrence said he felt nothing when he killed and went to eat at McDonald's after the murder. David went to visit friends. Derek said that his only thoughts about the victim's family were to get prepared for their revenge. William said that he went to the funerals of his victims to certify that they were, indeed, dead.

There was only one youth who seemed connected to thoughts about his victim. Namory went to the funeral of one of his victims and said it made him feel different about killing. He then gave money to the victim's mother and turned himself in to the police. Unlike the other youth who say they would not kill again for reasons that are in self-interest, Namory said, "I don't want to hurt others anymore."

### **Future As Past**

What relationship do these youth see between their past behavior and choice of environment and how these led to their present circumstances, and their future? They seem to have no working understanding of the concept of the future. When asked, "What are your thoughts about the future?" several youth asked for an explanation of the question. For too many of them, their thoughts about the future were the same as the past. If one returns to the same people, the same environment and the same behavioral patterns; what is the likelihood of finding oneself in the same situations? Most youth said they would carry a gun again for protection. If they do this, they are infinitely more likely to opt to use it than if they did not carry a gun. This, combined with the resolution that they would kill again if faced with the same situations, makes the futures of these youth predictably a reenactment of their past.

Only three youth had plans that considered not returning to their old neighborhoods. Namory and Stan wanted to get away from the negative influences

that brought them to Oak Hill. James said he cannot return to his neighborhood because people will try to kill him. All the rest said they would not consider relocation. One said his old neighborhood is too much fun. Others indicated that this is where they knew everyone.

Scott said that before he got committed, he saw his future as getting rich selling drugs, getting out of the ghetto and eventually opening a retail store. After being at Oak Hill, he still had the dream of opening a store, but wanted to achieve this by going to school and working. He said, however, that he would return to his old neighborhood and, though he intended to avoid old associates and hustling, still intended to carry a gun.

James also said that, before he was committed, he only saw a future involving drugs. While he recalled making five to six thousand dollars per night selling drugs, James said that he now wanted to learn a trade and get a job. His final comment, however, was an uncertain "I'll just see."

Terrence said, in the past, he had no thoughts about the future; just living from day to day. He had since developed a special interest that he planned to pursue and would learn a trade and work with his father's business. He added, however, that if these plans do not work out to what he wants, he will go back to hustling.

Derek had thoughts of a future involving basketball and college. Since being at Oak Hill, his plans included learning a trade and one day owning a business. These plans, however, did not preclude hustling. Derek said, when he leaves Oak Hill, he would try to stay clean for a while first before hustling again. He would also return to his old neighborhood which he said is "all I got."

Tariq said he doubts that he will return to his old neighborhood, but does not know and "can't say" what he will do when he gets out. David could not think of what is in his future. The most specific plans he could articulate were that he would "stay out of trouble." The most decisive comments that Ricky could make about when he leaves

Oak Hill were that he thinks he will return to school and get a job, he might go to a different neighborhood and that he probably will not carry a gun.

Ronnie, relative to his peers, had a hopeful outlook. Before being incarcerated, he said he had no thoughts about his future. Since then, he has planned to get his GED and get a job. He said he does not want to be locked up again and will not get involved in drugs. He will, however, return to his neighborhood, which he said is too much fun to consider leaving.

When one considers alternatives, he can only select from those he knows. If he can visualize only one alternative, then his choice may be tragically clear and unwavering. William most sadly and poignantly illustrated this. He was the most decisive of these youth in that he consciously accepted his future as his past. William said that when he leaves Oak Hill, he would return to a life of crime. He said that if he wanted to change, then he would not go back to his old neighborhood, but adds that he does not want to change "because there is too much money out there to make." He said he could make enough money to take care of himself and will sell drugs or rob to achieve this. When asked about his future, he simply stated, "I'll be OK until I die."

### **Bad Kids?**

With all this said about these young men, can one say that they are "bad?" Without dispute, the behavior and attitudes that led them to Oak Hill are negative and destructive, antisocial and pathological. Regardless of their motive or intent, the nature of their activities and their form of expression were unacceptable, reprehensible and dangerous to society. Yet, if one did not know that they had murdered, talking with most of them left the impression of pleasant and respectful adolescents who have the youthful ideas and mannerisms expected from teenagers. They hold many of society's generally held values about respecting elders, protecting children and honoring family. And they want what most people want - a

comfortable lifestyle, the ability to provide and the experience of excitement and pleasure. They deviate, however, from society in general in that they contrive unacceptable ways to uphold these acceptable values and gain access to these acceptable goals.

These youth outwardly present themselves as strong and independent young men who have and will continue to take care of themselves. They believe of themselves that they have a clear understanding of their motives and life in general. If one listens beyond their words, however, one sees that they are wrought with contradictions and conflict within themselves. Their needs are simple, yet their lives have become so complicated. They are hardened and desensitized, yet vulnerable and sensitive. They have uncontrollable energy, yet they are already tired of living. They are youthful and innocent, yet worn and overexposed to experiences that most people can only imagine. All of them have been witnesses and victims of violence, in many cases brutal, from childhood. So much so that they do not even consider this as unusual or unacceptable and are oblivious to the depth and scope of its impact on them.

These youth are not bad. They are kids to whom bad things have happened too often and for too long. The original crime was not committed by the youth, but against the youth in their earliest years. They have been left unprotected from abuse and neglect, violence and victimization. They have been left without care, without guidance and without safety. They have been left as needy and vulnerable children to fend for themselves - physically, emotionally and spiritually - in a world that is indifferent. These youth and those whose choices will lead them to the same circumstances, are not bad. Rather, they are sick and wounded and they desperately need healing.

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This study was conducted and prepared by Claire Johnson of the Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.



# DISCUSSION

**I**n the past several years, there has been a nation-wide increase in violent crime, and in urban areas an increase in homicide. Increases in the level of violence in a nation which already experiences one of the highest homicide rates in the western world is cause for great concern. For the District, the situation has become critical as the city, for the fourth consecutive year in 1991, had the highest rate of homicide in the country.

The specter of street crime, where homicide and other acts of violence have become daily occurrences, has cast a shadow of fear and despair over neighborhoods throughout the District and intensified community concern and commitment to identifying and addressing the root causes of this problem. While recent increases in violent crime and particularly homicide are attributable to numerous factors, the most pervasive and compelling among them are illicit drugs, availability of firearms, dysfunctional families, exposure to violence, media influences and the emergence of a culture that supports violence as a means of conflict resolution.

## Illicit Drugs

Violence is an intrinsic part of activity associated with drug trafficking. While homicide victims and assailants in the District fit a similar profile, the most startling difference between these two groups is in the number of youth who are perpetrators of homicide. There was a dramatic increase in the number of homicide arrestees ages 17 and younger from 6 percent in 1986 to 20 percent in 1990. Though youth involved in using and selling drugs appear to be declining and drug trafficking seems not to be the motive for homicides to the extent it was a few years ago, drugs are still a major factor in the proliferation of violence among youth. The lure of fast money and an exciting lifestyle seem to attract young people to a

sub-culture which is marked by drugs and violence. The enormous sums of money to be made at the expense of others appear to cheapen life and legitimize the use of violence to establish and maintain social order in this sub-culture.

## Availability of Firearms

The proliferation of lethal weapons plays a significant role in the ease with which people resort to violence. Recent police seizures of weapons indicate a greater availability of high-caliber and semi-automatic guns, which has resulted in a higher proportion of mortal gunshot wounds. Gun-running operations in nearby jurisdictions that do not have gun control laws allow for the unlimited, inexpensive and easily available supply of weapons on the streets of the District. The decision to obtain and use a gun requires minimal effort or resources.

## Family Dysfunction

Family dysfunction is typically defined in relation to several characteristics including single parenthood, teenage parenthood, child abuse and neglect, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of parental involvement and poverty. Various indicators show that the presence of these conditions in the District are widespread and, in many cases, significantly higher than indicators for the national average.

The emotional impact of teenage pregnancy and motherhood is a critical factor in the future success of the mother and child. For a teenager to become a mother and have a child for which to care creates unavoidable conflict between the needs of an adolescent and the competing needs of an infant. The stresses created by this situation and the poverty that is often attendant to it often impede normal and healthy family functioning.

Increasingly, female-headed households are becoming the norm in the District

as well as nationally. While there is nothing inherently pathological about female-headed families, there is agreement among sociologists, psychologist and family workers that the absence of a father or other consistent adult male role model has potentially negative implications for children - especially adolescents. Without appropriate role models, youth are more inclined to meet their needs for attachment, camaraderie and belonging through membership in gangs or "crews" as they are called in the District. This peer group becomes a strong competitor to the family.

Another indicator of family dysfunction is the fact that in the District, foster care placement is increasing at a rate that is presently twice the national average. Officials estimate that 50 to 80 percent of children reported as abused and neglected are part of families with drug or alcohol problems. A study by the Commission of Social Services found that children being left alone without supervision and substance abuse by a parent were the two leading reasons for foster care placement. Another recent study found that the lack of parenting skills contributed significantly to the increase in foster care placements. Alcohol and drug abuse significantly impact on one's ability to parent and, thus, increases the number of children who need substitute parenting.

## Exposure to Violence

Increasingly, violent crimes are stemming from disputes that are insignificant in nature, the result of personal affronts rather than conflicts arising from drug-related business. There seems to be an acceptance of violence as a first rather than last means of conflict resolution, and an expectation among those involved in conflict that violence will ensue and either party will necessarily be a victim or perpetrator of violence.

Studies that examine the impact of violence in the home and community

show that childhood exposure to violence is associated with adolescent and adult acceptance of violence as an inevitable part of living. This exposure includes being a victim as well as a witness to violence. Studies repeatedly indicate that youth who are themselves victims of violence and abuse, who live in families and communities in which violence is the preferred method of problem-solving are more likely to perpetrate violence.

Preliminary findings of a study of childhood exposure to violence among elementary school students reveal that children who are surrounded daily by violence can grow into adolescence believing that they will inevitably become victimizers or victims. While it is acknowledged that little is known about the long-term consequences of early exposure to violence, research suggests that, beyond symptoms of distress, depression and "acting out," exposure to violence affected the value children place on human life as well as their sense of morality.

The impact of family violence on the homicide rate cannot be overemphasized. In homicides nationally, the victim is often either a family member (16 percent) or a friend or acquaintance (33 percent). Many youth live in households where they have witnessed or experienced violence firsthand and at an early age and, thus, accept violence and a norm of human relations.

### **Emergence of a Counter-Culture**

The criminal activity experienced in the District and other jurisdictions throughout the country appears to be more than simply a crime wave. While overall crime, drug use and drug-related homicides are decreasing, violence continues to increase. One explanation within the context of drug-related and violent crime may be the emergence of a counter-culture - or alternative value system - among District youth.

The most likely candidates for this counter-culture, as discussed above, are youth who are characterized by one or more of certain circumstances - from dysfunctional families, having a history of sexual or physical abuse and having dropped out of school. Many of these youth share main-

stream ideals of material wealth, but they acquire this wealth through the illegitimate business of selling drugs to adults. Drug trafficking is seen merely as a business and violence associated with it is endured and inflicted as a cost of conducting this business. Violence is used among members of this counter-culture as a means of gaining respect and the more vicious and more frequent one kills, the more his reputation is enhanced. Perpetrators of this violence are often emotionally desensitized and have little sympathy for the victim or the victim's family. Committing crimes and then being arrested and imprisoned are not viewed as a stigma, but rather as a rite of passage to manhood. Those who adopt the values of this counter-culture view their lives only in terms of the present and do not expect to live long.

### **Media Influences**

In the twentieth century, the media has become a powerful determinant and purveyor of ideas and values. Any discussion of violence and homicide should note the role of the media. For groups with minimal resources at their disposal, television, movies and music become a primary source of entertainment and information. Persons depicted as being highly proficient in killing are portrayed as heroes and violence is repeatedly shown as an effective way to solve problems. Additionally, musical groups with which youth identify espouse violence in their messages. This violence creates fantasies of power and control for many who find themselves living in a grim reality where helplessness prevails. Consequently, such persons may be prone to act out their violent fantasies when frustrated, angry or under the influence of drugs.

### **A Prevention Strategy**

Any useful or comprehensive discussion about homicide prevention in the District must include the influence, responsibility and role of every facet of the community. The influences that lead people into a life of drugs, crime and violence are part of a process. It is not a linear process, but rather a cyclical one and at every point, impact for change is needed and possible. It is based on this philosophy that the District government, private groups and organizations and citizens must respond to the problem of homicide in the District.

In the past year, the District government focused on developing a violence prevention strategy that involves District government agencies whose services, programs and activities address conditions identified as contributing to the homicide and violence problem. An extensive examination of the problem of violence yielded two significant findings: that many factors, beyond drugs and weapons, contribute to escalating violence; and no single discipline, such as law enforcement, education or mental health, has identified any immediate solutions with predictable results. The implications of these findings point to strategies that depart from "business as usual" and embrace a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach. The District's strategy is intended to provide a context through which all sectors of the Washington area community can collaborate in the effort to prevent and reduce violence and its consequences.

The District's comprehensive plan to address violence is aimed at long- and short-term solutions that focus especially on aiding families and youth at risk. Included in the initiatives are reform of the juvenile justice system, establishment and enhancement of law enforcement and public safety initiatives, new government-wide prevention efforts through the early identification of children and families at risk and reform of the District's bail statute.

### **Concluding Remarks**

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

#### ERRATUM

The 7th paragraph in column 1 on page 33 should read:

Of the 20 percent of arrestees with cases pending, approximately one third were on release for either dangerous or violent charges and one third for drug offenses at the time they were arrested for the current homicide charge. Fifteen percent of the assailants were rearrested while awaiting final disposition for the homicide charge for which they were on release.

# REVIEW OF FINDINGS

**T**he Victim  
Homicide victims have increasingly become younger over the past five years, with the largest increase among victims ages 18 to 29. With regard to race and gender, black males as homicide victims have consistently increased, comprising the vast majority of homicide victims in each year in the study.

## The Assailant

As was the case with victims, the ages of those arrested for homicide has lowered. The greatest number of arrestees were ages 25 to 29 in 1986 and by 1990, the greatest number of arrestees were ages 18 to 20.

The number of black males arrested for homicide continues to rise as other categories decrease. In 1990, 93 percent of homicide arrestees were black males compared with 83 percent in 1986.

Nearly two thirds of assailants had not completed high school.

Criminal records of homicide arrestees reflect that 42 percent had prior criminal convictions. The majority (52 percent) of defendants with convictions had two or more.

Thirty-two percent of persons arrested for homicide had at least one tie to the system.

Approximately one third of arrestees were on release for either dangerous or violent charges and one third for drug offenses at the time they were arrested for the current homicide charge. Fifteen percent of the assailants were rearrested while awaiting final disposition of the homicide charge for which they were on release.

For those cases closed with no finding of guilt, 32 percent of the defendants had a subsequent arrest. An additional 4 percent of convicted cases were subsequently arrested.

Data show that drug positivity for homicide arrestees was substantially lower than that of the general arrestee population. During the study period, the primary drugs of choice for persons arrested for homicide were cocaine and PCP.

The number of offenders entering Lorton as the result of homicide convictions increased from 1987 to 1990 by 170 percent.

## Participation in Family and Income Support Programs

For persons convicted of homicide, 44 percent had either historically or at the time of conviction participated in government sponsored support programs including Aid for Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid, General Public Assistance, Foster Care and Medical Charities.

Thirty-two percent of victims had either at the time of their death or historically received one of the forms of family or income support aforementioned.

## Patterns of Homicide

The peak hours in which homicides were most often committed are from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. Over the past 5 years, the trend has been the same. Proportionately, the fewest number of homicides occurred between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Homicides in 1991 most often occurred between the hours of 9 p.m. and midnight, a pattern consistent with the occurrence of homicides in 1987, 1989 and 1990.

There has been no definitive trend with regard to the days of the week on which homicides most often occur.

The greatest number of homicides have either occurred in winter months or have been equal to summer months numeri-

cally with the exception of 1988 when the greatest number of homicides occurred in August.

In 1991, 78 percent of homicides were the result of shootings. Conversely, the use of a knife or other sharp instrument has steadily declined.

The proportion of crimes that can be directly attributed to the use and the sale of drugs has steadily decreased since its peak in 1988. In 1991, drugs as a motive for homicide fell to 35 percent.

Homicides that were the result of an argument have increased proportionately.

In 1991, the largest proportion of homicides occurred in Ward 8. This was also the case every year since 1986 with the exception of 1988.

In 1986 and 1987, the majority of homicide victims were District residents of Ward 8. Since 1987, more victims were reported to be residents of other states than the number in any one ward.

Within the District, females are much more likely to be slain in or near their homes than are males.

In an analysis of the 1,178 homicide cases filed with the courts from 1986 through 1990, 938 had reached final disposition as of June 30, 1991.

## Processing Homicide Cases

Findings of an analysis of the 1,178 homicide cases filed with the court between 1988 and 1990 show that, of the 938 homicide cases that reached disposition, 52 percent resulted in convictions for some charge - often a less serious charge - and there was no finding of guilt in 48 percent of the total cases filed.

In 1986, the conviction rate was 65 percent, with no finding of guilt in the remaining 35 percent. By 1990, 35 percent of cases resulted in convictions. Sixty-five percent reached final disposition without a finding of guilt.

Cases dismissed for want of prosecution or dismissed without prejudice rose from a 23 percent of all homicide arrests in 1986 to 56 percent of the total in 1990.

Fifty-two percent of the homicide cases filed from 1986 to 1991 resulted in a conviction.

Fifteen percent of homicide defendants were initially released on non-financial conditions. Thirty two percent had some form of money bond set and 34 percent were held without bond.

The majority of first degree murder cases were held without bond, 59 percent were detained at the initial appearance and bonds were set in 20 percent of the cases.

For persons charged with second degree murder, money bond was imposed in 56 percent of cases and 28 percent were released on some form of conditional or non-financial release.

Thirty percent of all homicide cases were indicted within 90 days of arrest. Sixty-five percent were indicted within 180 days of arrest.

Sixty percent of cases reached final disposition within one year. Among cases where guilt was eventually established and cases that were resolved by a jury trial, 74 percent took more than one year to reach final disposition.

Among cases involving a plea, 58 percent took longer than one year to reach final disposition.

Among the cases where the defendant was ultimately acquitted (found not guilty), 63 percent took longer than one year to reach final disposition.

Among homicide defendants for whom a money bond was set, 76 percent were indicted within six months of arrest. Among those released on conditions, 69 percent were indicted within six months. Finally, among those either held without bond or those held after a preventive detention hearing, only 57 percent were indicted within six months.

## Investigating Homicides

By December 31, 1991, 80 percent of homicides that occurred in 1986 had been closed, 62 percent of those committed in 1987, 58 percent of those committed in 1988, 64 percent of those committed in 1989, 65 percent of those committed in 1990 and 54 percent of those committed in 1991.

## Homicide Among Youth

Youth serving commitments for homicide at the District's juvenile secure detention facility were individually interviewed to gain insight to their thoughts about what they did and why. The youth were asked about their socioeconomic conditions, their families, how well they perform in school, whether or not and which parent was present in the home and a range of other sociodemographic questions. However, the focus of the interviews was questions that sought insight to their thought processes, their judgement and reasoning, their perceptions of past and future and their understanding of the responsibility and role they have in their self-determination.

Survey findings concurred with typical sociodemographic profiles of youth involved in the juvenile justice system and revealed character insights that are not typically known. The youth had little understanding of alternatives to their criminal actions and are not interested in changing their lifestyles or behavior or the probable course of their lives. They seem not to have a sense of remorse for the murders they have committed and accept the certainty of a very dismal and limited future.

## Discussion

It is suggested that, while recent increases in violent crime and particularly homicide are attributable to numerous factors, the most pervasive and compelling among them are illicit drugs, availability of firearms, dysfunctional families, exposure to violence, media influences and the emergence of a culture that supports violence as a means of conflict resolution.

The District's comprehensive plan to address violence includes initiatives to reform the juvenile justice system, establish and enhance law enforcement and public safety initiatives, embark on new government-wide prevention efforts through the early identification of children and families at risk and reform of the District's bail statute.

# APPENDIX

Table A-1  
National Homicide Rates per 100,000 population  
Calendar Years 1960-1990

Cities*	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990
Dallas	13.4	15.4	28.7	27.4	35.4	33.2	44.4
Houston	12.2	13.1	23.5	25.3	39.1	26.2	34.8
Baltimore	11.4	14.0	25.5	30.0	27.5	27.6	41.4
Washington, D.C.	10.6	18.4	29.2	32.8	31.5	23.5	78.1
Cleveland	9.6	12.6	36.1	43.6	46.3	24.0	33.2
Detroit	9.0	11.5	31.1	44.2	45.7	58.2	56.6
New Orleans	8.8	13.1	16.9	27.6	39.1	27.1	61.2
Memphis	7.8	6.8	14.6	18.6	23.6	18.6	31.9
Philadelphia	7.5	9.9	18.1	23.0	25.9	16.6	31.7
New York	5.0	8.0	14.2	22.2	25.8	19.3	30.7

\* Ranked by 1960 homicide rate.

Source: Uniform Crime Report, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Table A-3  
Day of Homicide  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

Day	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Sunday	32	16	45	20	47	13	62	14	56	12	62	13
Monday	24	17	23	10	53	14	76	17	60	12	57	12
Tuesday	22	11	35	16	55	15	61	14	62	13	77	16
Wednesday	39	20	34	15	46	12	70	16	53	11	62	13
Thursday	24	17	27	12	45	12	53	12	48	10	75	15
Friday	22	11	28	12	52	14	62	14	97	20	76	15
Saturday	31	16	33	15	74	20	57	13	104	21	80	16
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	<1	0	0
Total	194		225		372*		441*		484*		489*	

\* Includes homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Table A-2  
Homicide Rates  
in the District of Columbia  
Calendar Years 1960-1991

Year	Homicide Total	Homicide Rate
1960	81	10.6
1961	88	11.5
1962	91	11.6
1963	95	11.9
1964	132	16.3
1965	148	18.4
1966	141	17.5
1967	178	22.0
1968	195	24.1
1969	287	36.0
1970	221	29.2
1971	275	37.1
1972	245	32.8
1973	268	35.9
1974	277	38.3
1975	235	32.8
1976	188	26.8
1977	192	27.8
1978	189	28.0
1979	180	27.4
1980	200	30.5
1981	233	36.9
1982	194	30.8
1983	186	29.6
1984	175	28.1
1985	148	23.6
1986	194	30.9
1987	225	35.8
1988	369	59.5
1989	434	70.0
1990	474	78.1
1991	483	79.6

Source: Uniform Crime Report, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

**Table A-4  
Month of Homicide  
Calendar Years 1986-1991**

Month	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
January	22	11	17	8	37	10	51	12	52	11	45	9
February	16	8	18	8	17	5	39	9	37	8	35	7
March	12	6	19	8	27	7	37	8	38	8	33	7
April	10	5	14	6	24	7	38	9	25	5	38	8
May	19	10	17	7	20	5	29	7	36	7	46	9
June	20	10	16	7	26	7	26	6	35	7	32	7
July	13	7	19	8	27	7	34	8	52	11	45	9
August	14	7	17	8	38	10	51	12	44	9	51	10
September	13	7	18	8	27	7	31	7	34	7	37	8
October	18	9	21	9	42	11	35	8	46	10	43	9
November	21	11	20	9	43	12	35	8	44	9	43	9
December	16	8	39	13	41	11	35	8	41	8	41	8
Total	194		225		369		441*		484*		489*	

\* Includes homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

**Table A-5  
Non-Resident Homicide Victims  
Calendar Years 1986-1991**

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Maryland	17	65	23	70	42	74	53	61	61	73	72	74
Virginia	6	23	2	6	7	12	23	26	14	17	15	15
New York	0	0	4	12	5	9	9	10	8	10	6	6
Other	3	12	4	12	3	5	2	2	1	<1	4	4
Total	26		33		57		87		84		97	

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Table A-6  
Residence of Victim by Ward  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
Ward 1	25	13	18	8	41	11	38	9	49	10	52	11
Ward 2	22	11	19	8	32	9	33	8	38	8	29	6
Ward 3	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	<1	1	<1	1	<1
Ward 4	8	4	16	7	17	5	23	5	28	6	36	7
Ward 5	22	11	22	10	45	12	51	12	64	13	69	14
Ward 6	25	13	18	8	41	11	62	14	61	13	62	13
Ward 7	21	11	30	13	36	10	43	10	59	12	55	11
Ward 8	30	15	41	18	52	14	46	10	67	14	65	13
Outside D.C.	26	13	33	15	57	15	87	20	84	17	97	20
Unknown	15	8	28	12	49	13	57	13	33	7	23	5
Total	194		225		373*		441*		484*		489*	

\* Includes homicides classified as justifiable.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Table A-7  
Victims Slain in the Census Tract of Residence\*  
by Gender  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number slain within census tract of residence	75	46	53	32	81	33	59	32	64	35	43	34
Percent slain within own home within census tract of residence**	96%	70%	89%	66%	83%	61%	83%	51%	77%	42%	85%	42%

\* For victims whose place of residence and location of homicide were known.

\*\* Victims who were slain in the census tract of residence and either inside or within the immediate vicinity of their place of residence.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.



Table A-8  
**Residence of Alleged Assailants**  
**Calendar Years 1986-June 1991**

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991*
	%**	%**	%**	%**	%**	%**
District	72	83	78	80	85	82
Maryland	21	11	9	10	8	12
Virginia	3	3	4	2	2	2
Other	4	4	9	7	5	4

\* First 6 months 1991.

\*\* Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Metropolitan Police Department.

Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

Table A-9  
**Outcome of Homicide Cases Reaching Disposition\***  
**Calendar Year 1986**

	Murder I w/a	Murder I	Murder II w/a	Murder II	Man- slaughter	Other Charges	Totals
Total Cases Processed	27	37	50	13	3	15	145
Indicted	43	9	35	8	9	14	118
Indicted on							
Arrest Charge	18	7	23	1	0	3	52
Indicted from							
Other Charges	25	2	12	7	9	11	66
No Finding of Guilt	10	14	18	5	1	3	51
Convicted	17	23	32	8	2	12	94
Convicted on							
Arrest Charge	3	4	7	1	1	3	19
Convicted on							
Higher Charge	0	5	1	2	1	9	18
Convicted on							
Lesser Charge	14	14	24	5	0	0	57

\* Total excludes open cases.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.

Prepared by: Pretrial Services Agency.

Table A-10  
**Outcome of Homicide Cases Reaching Disposition\***  
**Calendar Year 1987**

	Murder I w/a	Murder I	Murder II w/a	Murder II	Man- slaughter	Other Charges	Totals
Total Cases Processed	26	23	58	9	5	20	141
Indicted	39	6	34	5	4	25	113
Indicted on							
Arrest Charge	15	2	25	1	1	8	52
Indicted from							
Other Charges	24	4	9	4	3	17	61
No Finding of Guilt	4	7	26	4	3	5	50
Convicted	22	16	32	5	1	15	91
Convicted on							
Arrest Charge	9	1	10	1	1	9	31
Convicted on							
Higher Charge	0	6	0	1	0	6	13
Convicted on							
Lesser Charge	13	9	22	3	0	0	47

\* Total excludes open cases.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.

Prepared by: Pretrial Services Agency.

Table A-11  
**Outcome of Homicide Cases Reaching Disposition\***  
**Calendar Year 1988**

	Murder I w/a	Murder I	Murder II w/a	Murder II	Man- slaughter	Other Charges	Totals
Total Cases Processed	91	19	72	5	2	25	214
Indicted	85	1	38	3	11	18	156
Indicted on							
Arrest Charge	53	0	25	1	1	6	86
Indicted from							
Other Charges	32	1	13	2	10	12	70
No Finding of Guilt	36	10	46	2	2	3	99
Convicted	55	9	26	3	0	22	115
Convicted on							
Arrest Charge	24	0	9	1	0	9	43
Convicted on							
Higher Charge	0	3	1	0	0	13	17
Convicted on							
Lesser Charge	31	6	16	2	0	0	55

\* Total excludes open cases.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.

Prepared by: Pretrial Services Agency.

Table A-12  
**Outcome of Homicide Cases Reaching Disposition\***  
**Calendar Year 1989**

	Murder I w/a	Murder I	Murder II w/a	Murder II	Man- slaughter	Other Charges	Totals
Total Cases Processed	116	13	66	10	7	48	260
Indicted	80	2	46	7	13	35	183
Indicted on							
Arrest Charge	46	1	29	2	2	9	89
Indicted from							
Other Charges	34	1	17	5	11	26	94
No Finding of Guilt	57	2	46	5	4	17	131
Convicted	59	11	20	5	3	31	129
Convicted on							
Arrest Charge	11	0	5	0	1	11	28
Convicted on							
Higher Charge	0	2	1	0	0	20	23
Convicted on							
Lesser Charge	48	9	14	5	2	0	78

\* Total excludes open cases.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.

Prepared by: Pretrial Services Agency.

Table A-13  
**Outcome of Homicide Cases Reaching Disposition\***  
**Calendar Year 1990**

	Murder I w/a	Murder I	Murder II w/a	Murder II	Man- slaughter	Other Charges	Totals
Total Cases Processed	89	7	61	9	0	12	178
Indicted	37	2	31	1	11	15	97
Indicted on							
Arrest Charge	27	0	19	0	0	2	48
Indicted from							
Other Charges	10	2	12	1	11	13	49
No Finding of Guilt	63	4	35	8	0	6	116
Convicted	26	3	26	1	0	6	62
Convicted on							
Arrest Charge	9	1	2	0	0	3	15
Convicted on							
Higher Charge	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Convicted on							
Lesser Charge	17	2	24	1	0	0	44

\* Total excludes open cases.

Source: Pretrial Services Agency.

Prepared by: Pretrial Services Agency.

Table A-14  
Homicides in Census Tracts  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

Census Tract	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
1.0	0	1	1	2	0	0
2.0	0	0	1	2	1	1
3.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.2	0	0	0	0	0	1
6.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7.1	0	0	0	0	0	1
7.2	1	0	0	0	0	0
8.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
8.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
9.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
9.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
10.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
10.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
11.0	2	2	0	1	0	1
12.0	0	0	0	1	1	0
13.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
13.2	2	0	0	0	0	0
14.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16.0	0	1	0	0	0	0
17.0	0	2	2	1	4	1
18.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
18.3	0	0	1	2	0	1
18.4	0	1	1	2	5	0
19.1	0	0	1	3	1	1
19.2	0	0	0	1	0	2
20.1	0	0	2	0	0	1
20.2	0	1	1	1	2	2
21.1	1	2	3	4	2	6
21.2	0	1	1	3	3	7
22.1	0	1	1	3	0	1
22.2	0	1	0	1	4	0
23.1	0	0	2	0	1	3
23.2	0	4	0	3	0	2
24.0	0	0	0	0	6	2
25.1	1	3	1	0	2	2
25.2	1	0	4	3	3	5
26.0	0	1	0	1	0	0
27.1	1	1	1	4	3	0
27.2	2	0	1	5	0	3
28.0	0	3	8	7	7	10
29.0	1	1	4	3	1	6
30.0	4	1	1	2	3	4
31.0	4	0	2	3	8	5
32.0	0	7	3	9	4	4
33.1	4	1	2	4	5	4

Table A-14 (continued)  
**Homicides in Census Tracts**  
**Calendar Years 1986-1991**

Census Tract	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
33.2	2	1	2	1	6	6
34.0	2	0	2	5	6	3
35.0	1	0	1	2	6	5
36.0	4	5	6	0	9	4
37.0	6	8	8	5	1	7
38.0	3	0	4	0	2	2
39.0	0	1	2	1	1	1
40.0	1	0	1	2	2	0
41.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
42.1	2	0	0	0	1	1
42.2	0	0	0	0	0	1
43.0	0	3	2	3	2	2
44.0	3	2	1	1	2	1
45.0	2	1	4	4	1	2
46.0	1	1	5	5	11	11
47.0	1	2	7	8	11	5
48.1	1	2	5	4	3	4
48.2	1	3	2	3	0	0
49.1	0	3	2	2	11	5
49.2	2	3	6	2	9	4
50.0	0	2	4	2	3	6
51.0	1	3	1	3	1	1
52.1	3	1	1	3	2	2
52.2	0	0	1	0	0	1
53.1	0	1	0	0	0	1
53.2	0	2	1	1	1	0
54.1	3	0	1	0	0	1
54.2	0	0	0	0	1	0
55.1	0	0	2	0	0	0
55.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
56.0	1	0	0	0	0	0
57.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
57.2	0	0	1	0	0	1
58.0	1	1	4	1	0	3
59.0	1	0	1	0	1	0
60.1	1	1	0	1	0	0
60.2	0	0	0	1	2	1
61.0	0	0	2	2	1	0
62.1	1	2	0	0	0	0
62.2	1	0	0	1	2	0
63.1	1	1	1	0	0	0
63.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
64.0	3	2	8	3	4	3
65.0	0	0	1	0	0	0
66.0	0	0	1	0	0	0
67.0	0	1	0	1	1	1
68.1	2	0	2	3	1	3
68.2	2	0	2	1	0	1

Table A-14 (continued)  
**Homicides in Census Tracts**  
**Calendar Years 1986-1991**

Census Tract	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
68.4	0	0	0	0	1	0
69.0	1	3	1	2	1	3
70.0	1	2	2	1	1	1
71.0	0	5	4	6	18	3
72.0	3	5	8	3	4	7
73.1	0	0	1	0	0	0
73.2	1	7	5	4	11	6
73.4	1	6	3	4	6	9
73.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
74.1	4	3	4	2	7	8
74.4	5	1	4	10	14	10
74.5	6	6	6	9	6	10
74.6	0	0	5	4	4	1
74.7	0	1	0	10	7	3
74.8	1	4	6	6	0	6
75.1	1	3	16	6	6	12
75.2	4	4	1	4	2	5
76.1	1	1	3	4	5	13
76.3	1	1	2	0	5	3
76.4	0	2	4	2	2	4
76.5	2	2	1	0	1	2
77.3	1	3	5	9	3	8
77.7	0	1	3	7	6	5
77.8	1	0	2	4	3	4
77.9	0	2	3	0	1	1
78.3	1	0	7	4	5	5
78.4	0	1	3	11	8	6
78.5	0	1	1	3	5	7
78.7	4	3	0	3	1	0
78.8	2	3	3	5	10	11
79.1	2	1	3	9	9	5
79.3	2	0	2	1	1	5
80.1	0	0	1	0	5	3
80.2	0	0	0	3	0	6
81.0	0	0	0	3	0	1
82.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
83.1	2	0	0	1	1	0
83.2	0	0	2	3	1	3
84.1	3	2	3	3	4	2
84.2	0	2	0	2	1	1
85.0	3	0	7	6	9	7
86.0	0	0	2	0	2	1
87.1	2	1	6	4	6	3
87.2	2	0	1	3	0	3
88.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
88.2	0	3	3	2	4	4
88.3	1	0	2	4	2	3
88.4	0	3	4	7	4	4

Table A-14 (continued)  
Homicides in Census Tracts  
Calendar Years 1986-1991

Census Tract	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
89.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
89.3	0	0	0	2	1	1
89.4	2	0	2	7	5	6
90.1	0	1	0	0	1	0
90.2	1	1	3	3	1	2
91.1	1	2	3	7	5	5
91.2	2	5	5	11	3	6
92.1	0	0	1	0	2	0
92.2	0	3	2	6	4	10
93.1	0	0	2	2	3	1
93.2	0	1	2	2	1	4
94.0	2	2	0	1	2	0
95.1	0	0	1	1	6	0
95.2	0	2	3	1	1	0
95.3	1	0	1	0	0	1
95.5	0	0	0	2	2	1
95.7	0	0	0	2	0	0
95.8	0	0	0	0	2	0
96.1	1	1	2	2	2	1
96.2	6	1	2	0	0	3
96.3	4	4	1	0	1	1
96.4	0	1	0	2	0	2
97.0	1	3	6	8	12	12
98.1	4	1	5	14	7	5
98.2	0	1	4	2	1	3
98.3	3	2	4	3	3	1
98.4	1	2	1	5	5	2
98.5	1	2	0	0	2	3
98.6	7	2	6	3	7	6
98.7	5	8	1	4	6	2
98.8	3	1	1	2	3	8
99.1	0	1	0	1	0	0
99.2	1	1	0	0	1	2
99.3	1	1	3	2	4	3
99.4	6	3	7	7	2	2
99.5	1	0	3	1	2	5
99.6	0	0	1	0	4	1
99.7	0	0	3	8	2	3
unk	1	5	13	6	8	7
na	2	1	5	2	2	9

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Prepared by: Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis.

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