An Analysis of Austin, Texas Homicide: Offenses, Victims, and Suspects in 2013

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Introduction

The following data reflects all non-negligent homicide cases reported to Austin Police Department for 2013. Negligent homicides were not included. This report is meant as a descriptive summary of the homicide specifics and characteristics within Austin city limits. Data sources include U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States 2012*, Texas Department of Public Safety's *2012 Crime in Texas Report*, City of Austin demographic information, Versadex (APD's record management system), APD Homicide Unit's log, and case jacket information directly maintained by detectives assigned to each case.

Since the release of the 2013 versions of the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States* and the Texas Department of Public Safety's *Crime in Texas* are typically not released until September, comparison to 2012 data was used for this report. These numbers are provided as a way to put Austin's murder numbers into a broad context. The Department of Justice discourages ranking agencies on the sole basis of UCR data, so further comparison between jurisdictions should include in-depth analysis of the many variables that affect crime.

UCR Criminal Homicide Definitions

According to the *Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook*, two categories of murder are included for UCR purposes. The first, Criminal Homicide – Murder and Non-negligent Manslaughter, is defined as the willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another. Included in this category is any death resulting from a fight, argument, quarrel, assault or commission of a crime. The second category, Criminal Homicide – Manslaughter by Negligence, is defined as the killing of another person through gross negligence. Not included as criminal homicide are deaths resulting from suicides, fetal deaths, traffic fatalities, or justifiable homicides. Justifiable homicides include the killing of a felon by a peace officer in the line of duty and the killing of a felon, during the commission of a felony, by a private citizen. Attempts at murder and assault with intent to kill are recorded under Aggravated Assaults.

Police investigations are the sole basis for the offense classification. Any determinations made by courts, medical examiners, juries, or other judicial bodies are excluded for UCR purposes.

About the Data

AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT DATA DISCLAIMER
Understanding the following conditions about crime information tallied from the Versadex mainframe database will allow you to get the most value out of the data provided:
- Due to methodological differences in data collection, different data sources or reports may produce different statistics.
- The data is continuously being updated. The data provided represents a particular point in time and does not reflect the dynamic nature of the Versadex mainframe database.
- The data here may not reflect official Texas DPS, FBI UCR or NIBRS numbers.
- If the information provided here is used outside the department, then the following disclaimer applies-
  - "The Austin Police Department cannot assume any liability for any decision made or action taken or not taken by the recipient in reliance upon any information or data provided."

Executive Summary

The following summation may be made from the 2013 homicide data as of March 25, 2014.

- There were 25 homicides in Austin in 2013 for a rate of 3.0 murders per 100,000 population.
- The most active months for murder were April, July, September, and December with four murders each.
- Four (16%) homicides occurred in Edward sector, Frank sector, Henry sector and Ida sector. These four sectors account for a total of 64% of 2013's homicides.
- Fifteen (60%) of the homicides occurred in a single-family residence or apartment.
- A gun was used in 12 cases (48%).
- Seven (28%) of the murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Eight (32%) of the cases met the requirements for family violence.
- A robbery motive accounted for five (20%) of the murders.
- A total of 25 victims and 26 suspects were documented for the 2013 murders.
- Eleven victims (44%) were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Fifteen suspects (58%) were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Thirteen (52%) of the homicide victims in 2013 were Hispanic, seven (28%) were African American, and five (20%) were White.
- Twelve (46%) of the homicide suspects were African American, eight (31%) were Hispanic, and five (19%) were White.
- At least one suspect was an acquaintance in nine murders (36%). The suspect was a family member or significant other in eight cases (32%).
- Six murders were considered stranger-on-stranger murders (24%).
  - These murders include cases in which the victim was chosen at random as well as cases in which the victim and suspect were brought together by a location (such as a nightclub) or an activity (such as buying drugs.)
  - As of March 25, 2014, all of the stranger-on-stranger murders have been cleared.
  - None are believed to be related or committed by the same suspect(s).
- Several aspects of the 2013 murder cases that have not been tracked in the past were very noticeable.
  - Five of the homicides involved suspects possibly suffering from mental health disorders. In three of these cases, the suspect's mental issues played a part in the murders. In the other two cases, the suspect's mental issues may have played a part in the murders.
  - Three of the murder victims were gay, and one was a lesbian. One suspect was a lesbian who killed her partner. Two suspects were bisexual males and each killed a gay man.
- None of the homicides were murder/suicides as traditionally defined although one suspect later committed suicide in jail.
- As of March 25, 2014, 21 of the 25 2013 murders have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for an 84% clearance rate. Of the four cases that are considered "not cleared," only two of the cases are truly not solved.
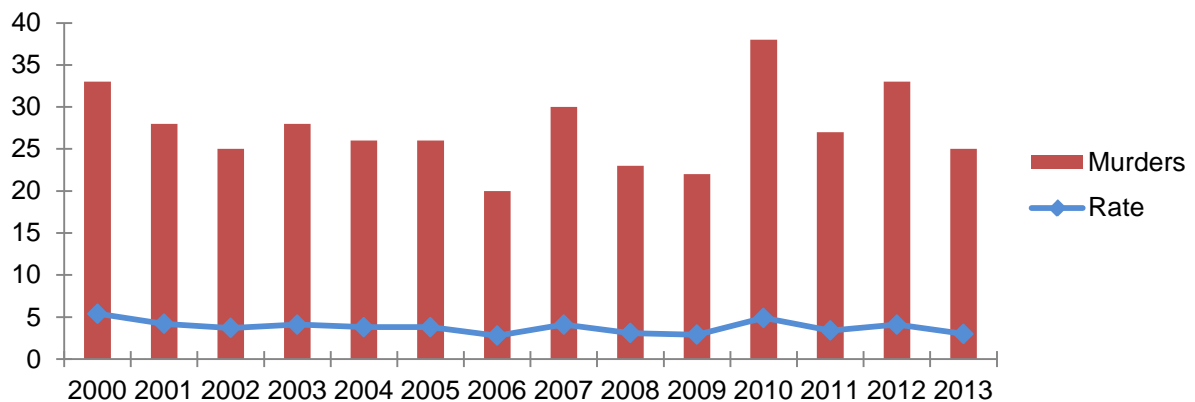
Statistical Representation

Homicide Data

- The analysis contained in this report was based on 2013 homicide data as of March 25, 2014. Only intentional homicides (non-negligent homicides) were included in the analysis.
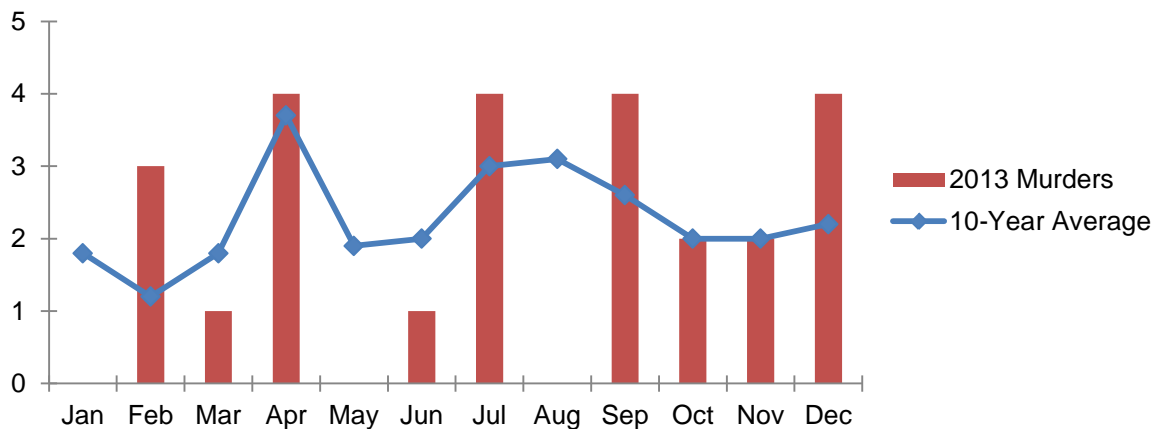
Homicide Totals by Year

- There were 25 homicides documented in Austin, Texas in 2013. This calculates to a rate of 3.0 murders per 100,000 population.
- In 2012, there were 33 homicides in Austin, 4.1 murders per 100,000 population.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States 2012* report:
  - The homicide rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 12.1 per 100,000 population.
  - The rate for the South Region was 5.5 per 100,000 population.
  - The rate for all of the United States was 4.7 per 100,000 population.
- According to the Texas Department of Public Safety's *2012 Crime in Texas Report*, the homicide rate for all of Texas was 4.4 per 100,000 population.
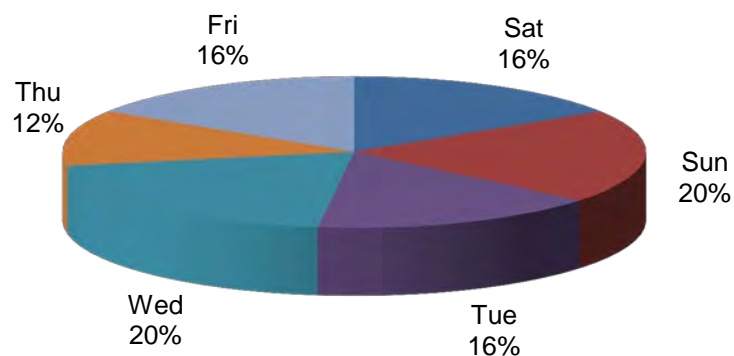
Homicide Totals by Month

- Several cases involved situations in which the victim was found days after being killed. Since it is difficult to determine the exact date and time of death, the date and time of discovery was used for month/day/time analysis.
- The most active months for murder were April, July, September, and December with four murders each.
- The least active months were January, May and August with zero murders each.

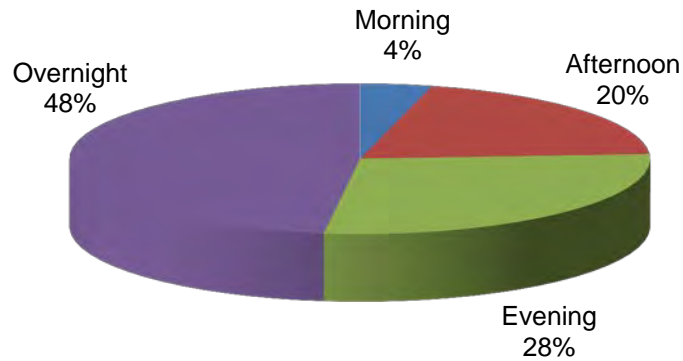
Homicides by Day of the Week

- Five (20%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered on a Sunday and five homicides occurred or were discovered on a Wednesday.
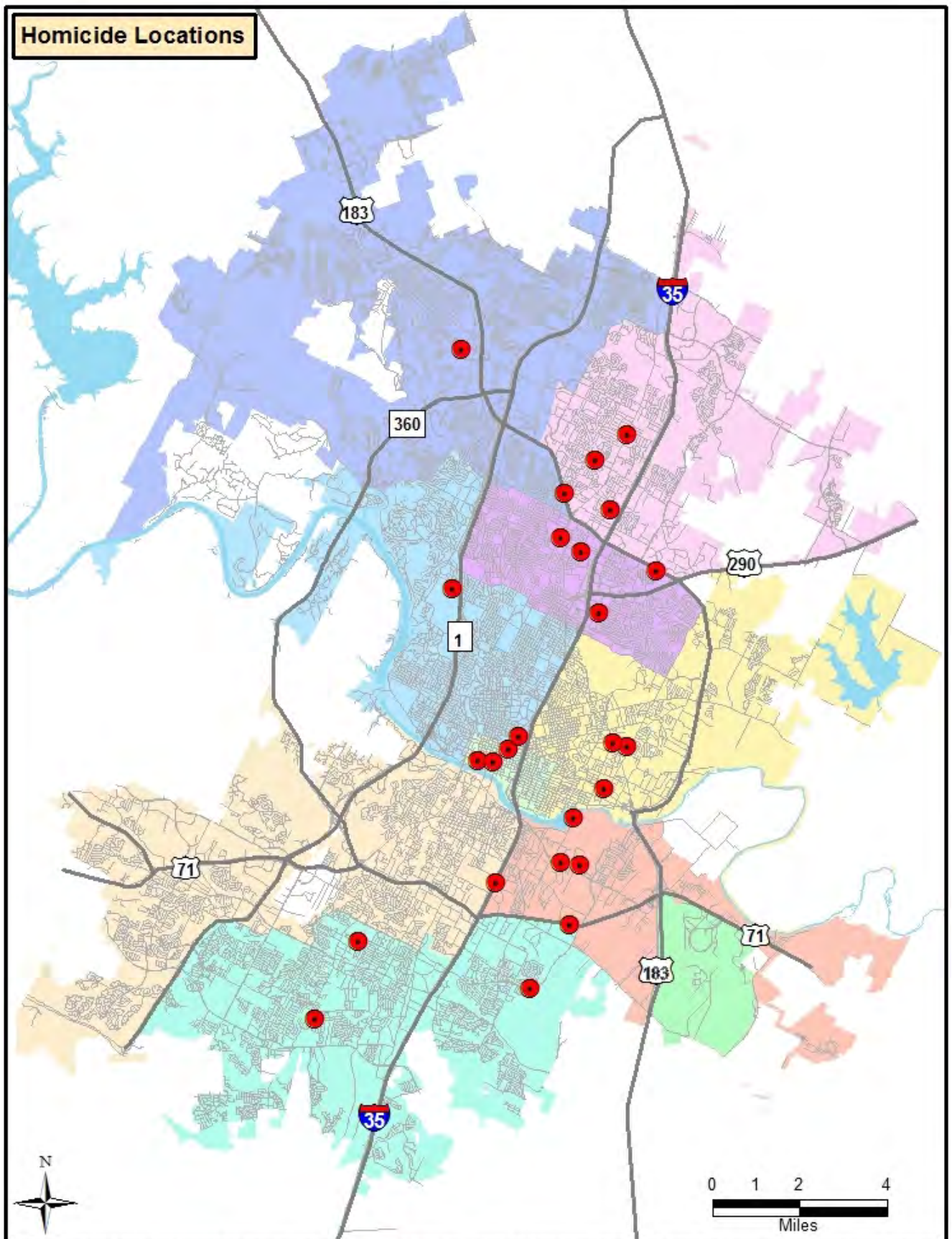- No homicides occurred or were discovered on a Monday.

Homicides by Time of the Day

- Twelve (48%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered during overnight hours.
- One (4%) of the homicides occurred or was discovered during morning hours.

Time is broken into four intervals: Morning is 6:00 a.m. to 11:59 a.m.
Afternoon is 12 noon to 5:59 p.m.
Evening is 6:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.
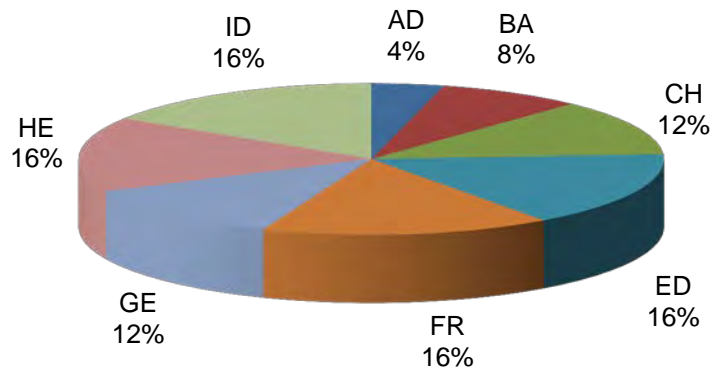Overnight is 12 midnight to 5:59 a.m.

Homicides by Location – Point Map

This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.
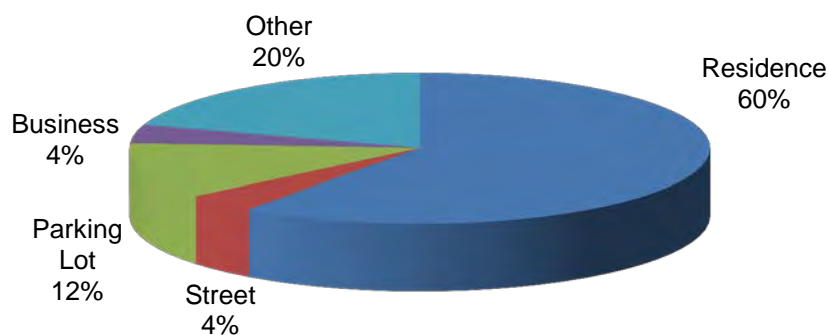
Homicides by Area Command

- Four (16%) homicides occurred in Edward sector, Frank sector, Henry sector and Ida sector. These four sectors account for a total of 64% of 2013's homicides.
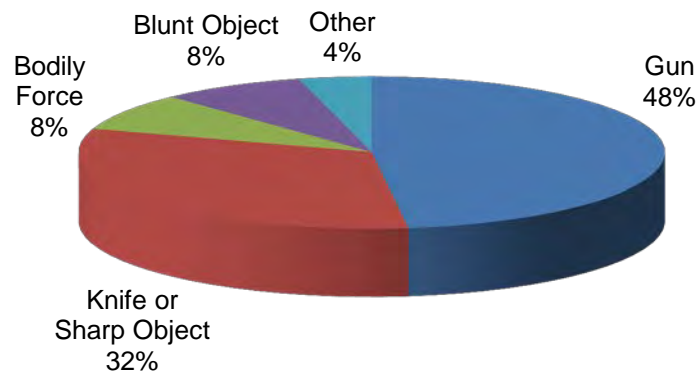- No murder occurred in David sector.

Homicides by Type of Premise

- Fifteen (60%) of the homicides occurred in a single-family residence or apartment. Of those, eleven occurred inside the residence or apartment.
- One homicide (4%) occurred on or along a street.
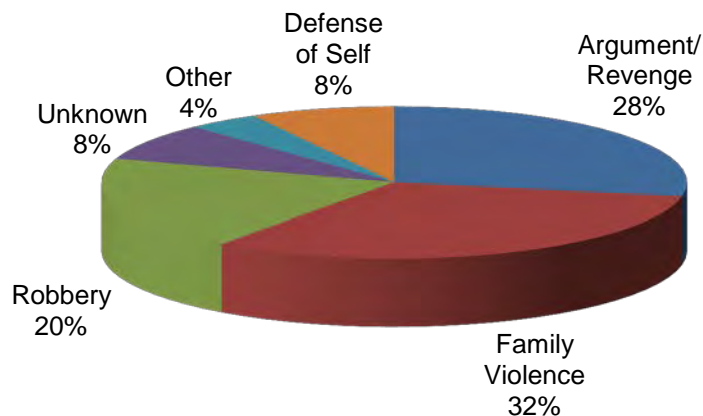- "Other" includes field, hospital, laundromat, motel, and park.

Types of Weapons Used

- A gun was used in 12 of the 25 murders, accounting for 48% of the weapon types used in the 2013 murders.
  - Eight of the guns were semi-automatic handguns, and four were revolvers.
- A knife or a sharp object was used in eight cases (32%).
- "Other" includes vehicle.

Homicide Motives

- Seven (28%) of the murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Eight (32%) of the cases met the requirements for family violence.
  - The murders were motivated by issues stemming from a close family, intimate partner, or ex-partner relationship.
  - Five of the cases involved intimate partners.
- A robbery motive accounted for five (20%) of the murders.
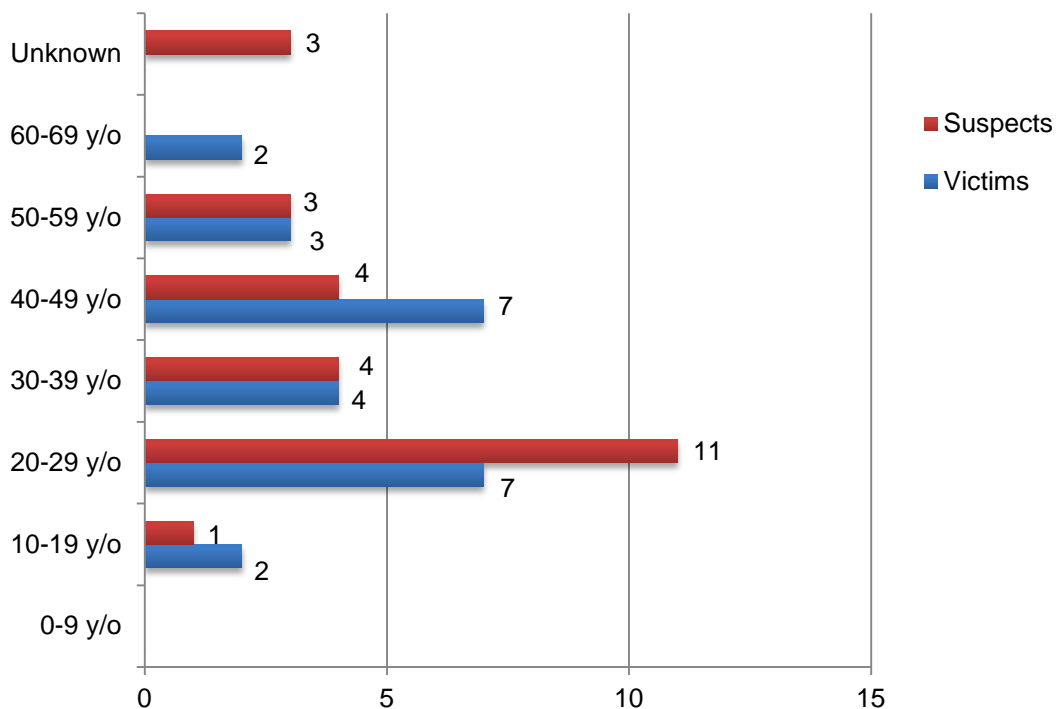- Two homicides (8%) were likely committed in defense of self or others.

Victims & Suspects

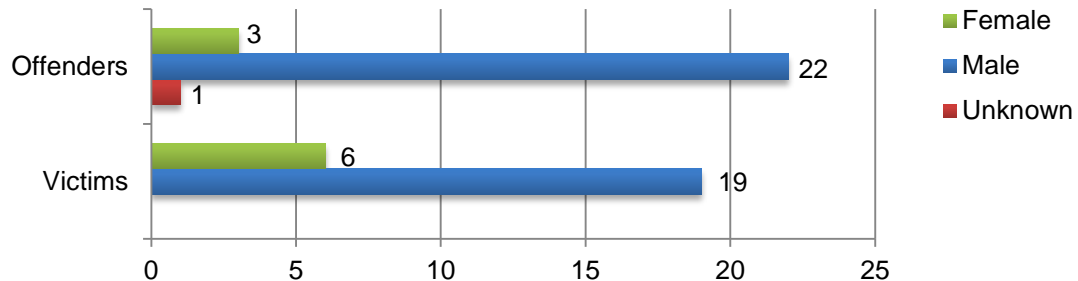- A total of 25 victims and 26 suspects were documented for the 2013 murders.

Homicides by Age

- The youngest victim was 18 years old and the oldest was 66 years old, with 11 of the victims (44%) falling between the ages of 20 and 39.
- In the cases in which the suspect's age was known, the youngest suspect was 17 years old and the oldest was 56 years old, with 15 of the suspects (58%) falling between the ages of 20 and 39.
- One case involved an assault in 1976 in which the victim was 29 years old at the time. The victim did not die until 2013 at the age of 66. The victim's age at the time of his death was used for analysis. The suspect was 42 at the time of the assault and died in 1995. Since he was dead at the time of the victim's death, his age at the time of the assault was used for analysis.
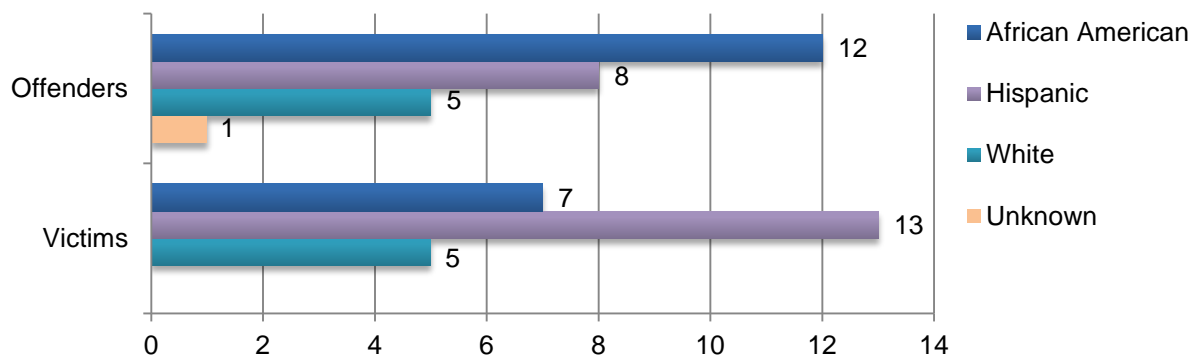
Homicides by Gender

- Nineteen males (76%) were victims in 2013.
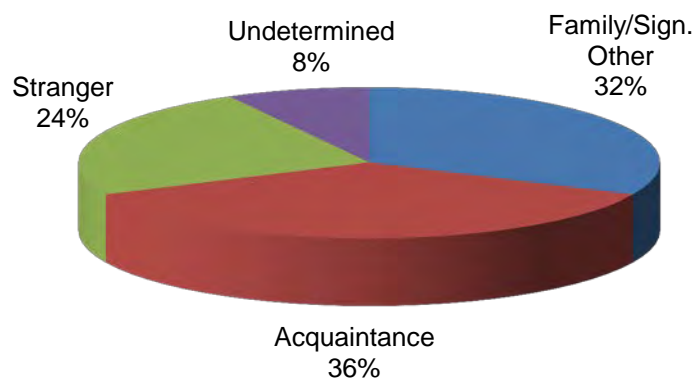- In the cases in which the suspect's gender was known, 22 suspects were males (85%).

Homicides by Race/Ethnicity

- Thirteen (52%) of the homicide victims in 2013 were Hispanic, seven (28%) were African American, and five (20%) were White.
  - Four victims were Mexican Nationals. One was from El Salvador.
- In the cases in which the suspect's race/ethnicity was known, 12 (46%) of the homicide suspects were African American, eight (31%) were Hispanic, and five (19%) were White.
  - Two suspects were Mexican Nationals.
- Victim and suspect demographics indicate that African Americans are over-represented as victims (28%) and as suspects (46%) of homicides. According to 2010 census data, African Americans account for 7.7% of the overall Austin population.
- Victim and suspect demographics indicate that Hispanics are over-represented as victims (52%) of homicides. They are slightly under-represented as suspects (31%). According to 2010 census data, Hispanics account for 35.1% of the overall Austin population.

Relationship between Victim and Suspect

- The relationship between victim and suspect(s) was established in 23 murders, while the relationship was undetermined in two (8%) murders.
- At least one suspect was an acquaintance in nine murders (36%). The suspect was a family member or significant other in eight cases (32%).
- Six murders were considered stranger-on-stranger murders (24%).
  - These murders include cases in which the victim was chosen at random as well as cases in which the victim and suspect were brought together by a location (such as a nightclub) or an activity (such as buying drugs.)
  - As of March 25, 2014, all of the stranger-on-stranger murders have been cleared.
  - None are believed to be related or committed by the same suspect(s).

Undetermined
8%

Family/Sign. Other
32%

Stranger
24%

Acquaintance
36%

Miscellaneous Victim and Suspect Information

- Two victims were transients. Three of the known suspects were transients.
- One victim was possibly a gang member. Three suspects were possible gang members, but no murders were motivated by gang membership or affiliation.
- Five of the homicides involved suspects possibly suffering from mental health disorders. In three of these cases, the suspect's mental issues played a part in the murders. In the other two cases, the suspect's mental issues may have played a part in the murders. This aspect of murder cases has not been tracked in the past but was very noticeable in the 2013 cases.
- Three of the murder victims were gay, and one was a lesbian. One suspect was a lesbian who killed her partner. Two suspects were bisexual males and each killed a gay man. This aspect of murder cases has not been tracked in the past but was very noticeable in the 2013 cases.
- Three of the murder victims were believed to be drug dealers. One of these murders has been solved and is believed to have been robbery/drug-related. Two of the murders have not been solved.
- None of the homicides were murder/suicides as traditionally defined although one suspect later committed suicide in jail.
- Three homicides involved multiple victims (two victims in each case) but only one victim died.
- One of the homicides involved two suspects.
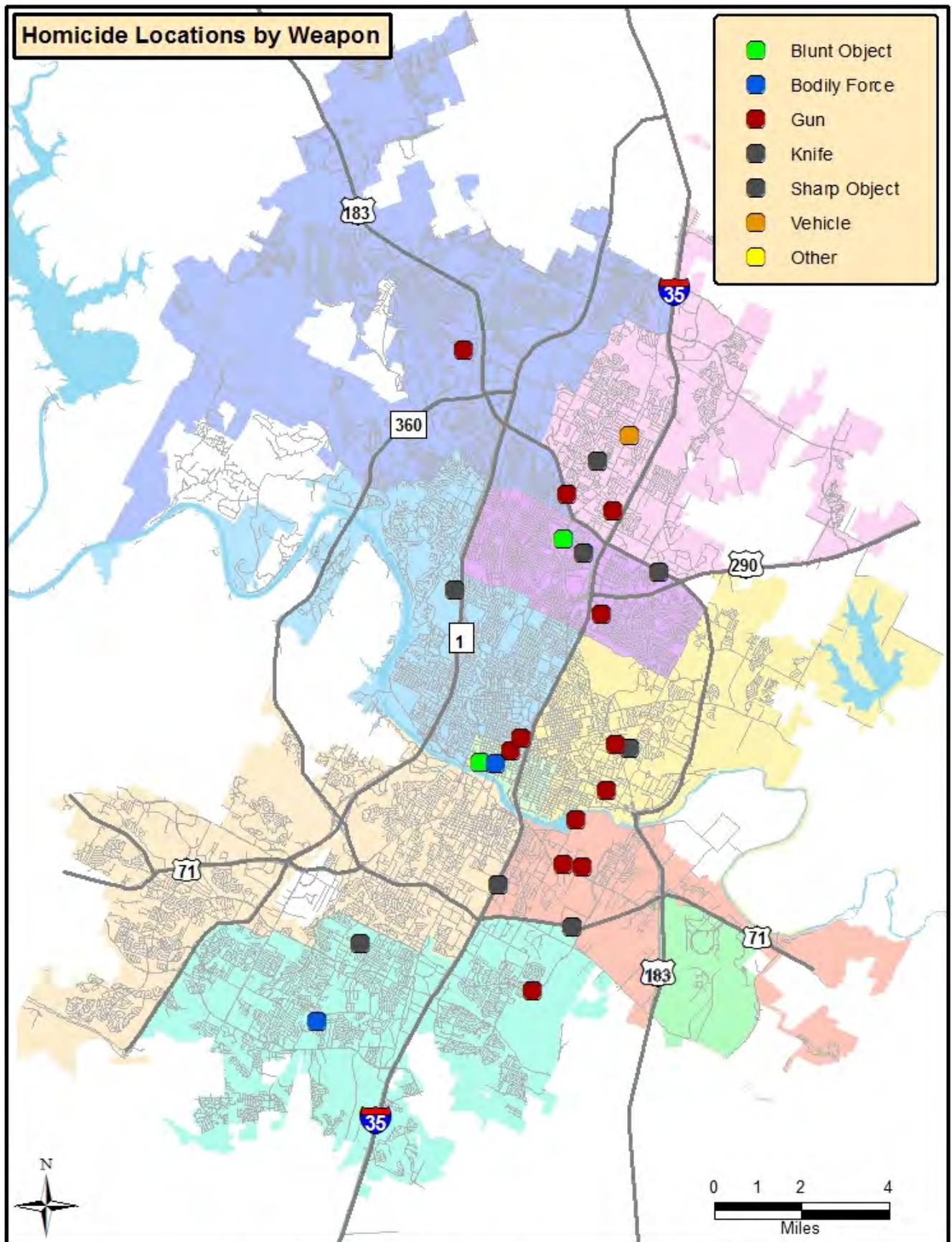- One case involved a victim who was assaulted in 1976 and died in 2013.

Family Violence, Contributing Factors, Offense Classification

- Eight (32%) of the murders met the Texas Penal Code & Family Code definition for family violence.
  - Five were committed by intimate partners or ex-partners.
  - Three were committed by a family member.
- Alcohol was believed to be a contributing factor in eight (32%) of the homicides.
- Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in six (24%) of the homicides.
- Five (20%) of the homicides were documented as Capital Murder, which includes the commission of an additional felony at the time of the murder, the murder of a law enforcement officer, the murder of more than one victim, or the murder of an individual under six years of age.
- One of the homicides was documented as Manslaughter. A person commits Manslaughter if he/she recklessly causes the death of an individual.
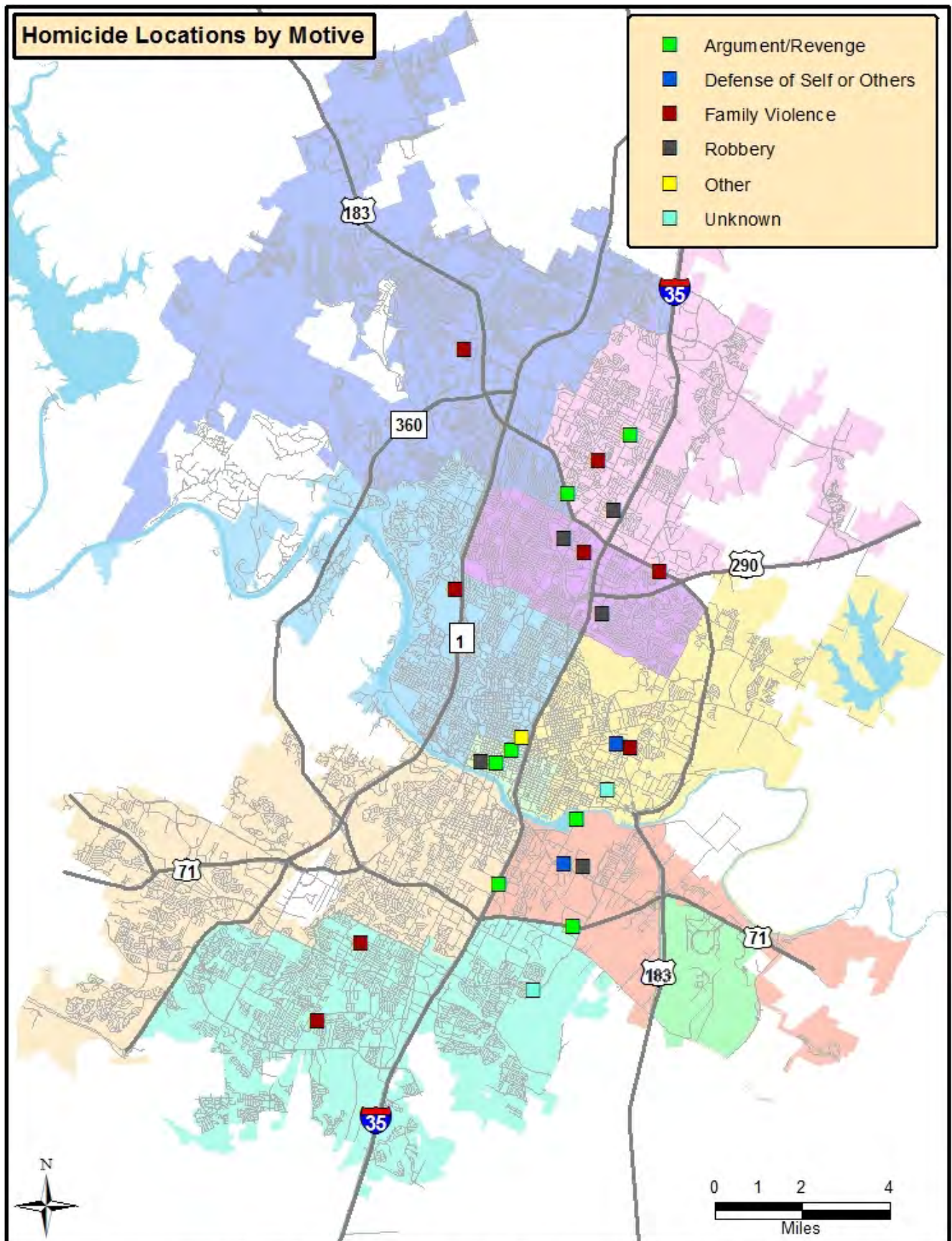
Homicide Clearance Rate

- As of March 25, 2014, 21 of the 25 2013 murders have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for an 84% clearance rate.
  - Twenty of the 25 cases were cleared during 2013. One was cleared in January 2014.
  - Of the 2013 cases that are considered "not cleared":
    - Two of the cases are not solved. The suspects have not been identified.
    - A warrant for the suspect in one of the 2013 cases has been issued, but the suspect has not been arrested yet.
    - In the fourth case, the suspect is known but a warrant has not been issued yet.
  - Four older murder cases were cleared during 2013: two 2010 cases and two 2012 cases. Two of these were cleared by the arrest of the suspect. One was cleared exceptionally when the grand jury no billed the suspect. One was cleared exceptionally when the suspect died in a traffic fatality.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States 2012:*
  - The clearance rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 50.9%. This includes all homicide cases that were cleared during 2012 regardless of when the murder occurred.
  - The rate for the South Region was 66.7%.
  - The rate for all of the United States was 62.5%.
- According to the Texas Department of Public Safety's *2012 Crime in Texas Report*, the clearance rate for all of Texas was 76%.
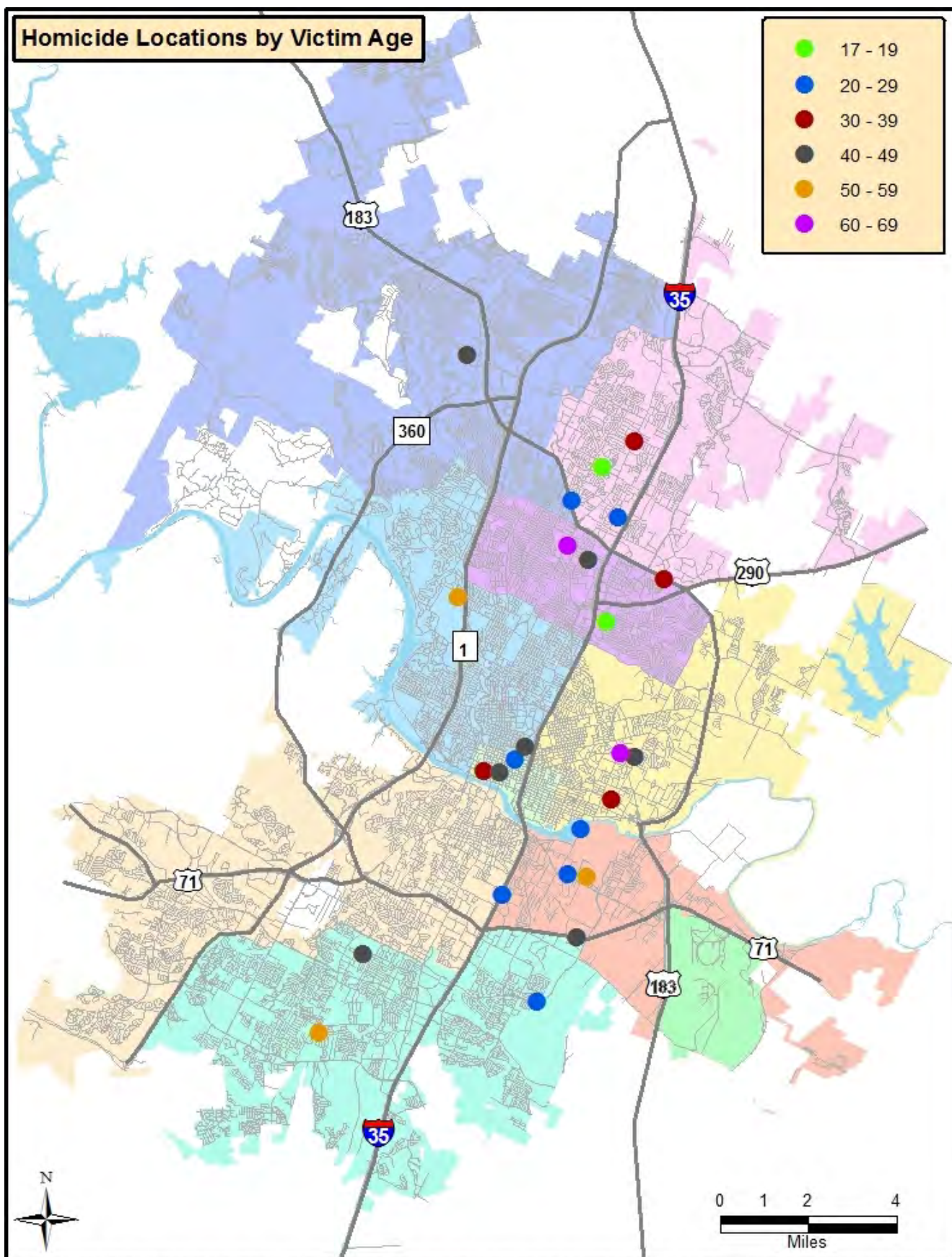
Other Views of the Data

Homicide Locations by Weapon

Legend:
- Blunt Object
- Bodily Force
- Gun
- Knife
- Sharp Object
- Vehicle
- Other

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Homicide Locations by Motive

- Argument/Revenge
- Defense of Self or Others
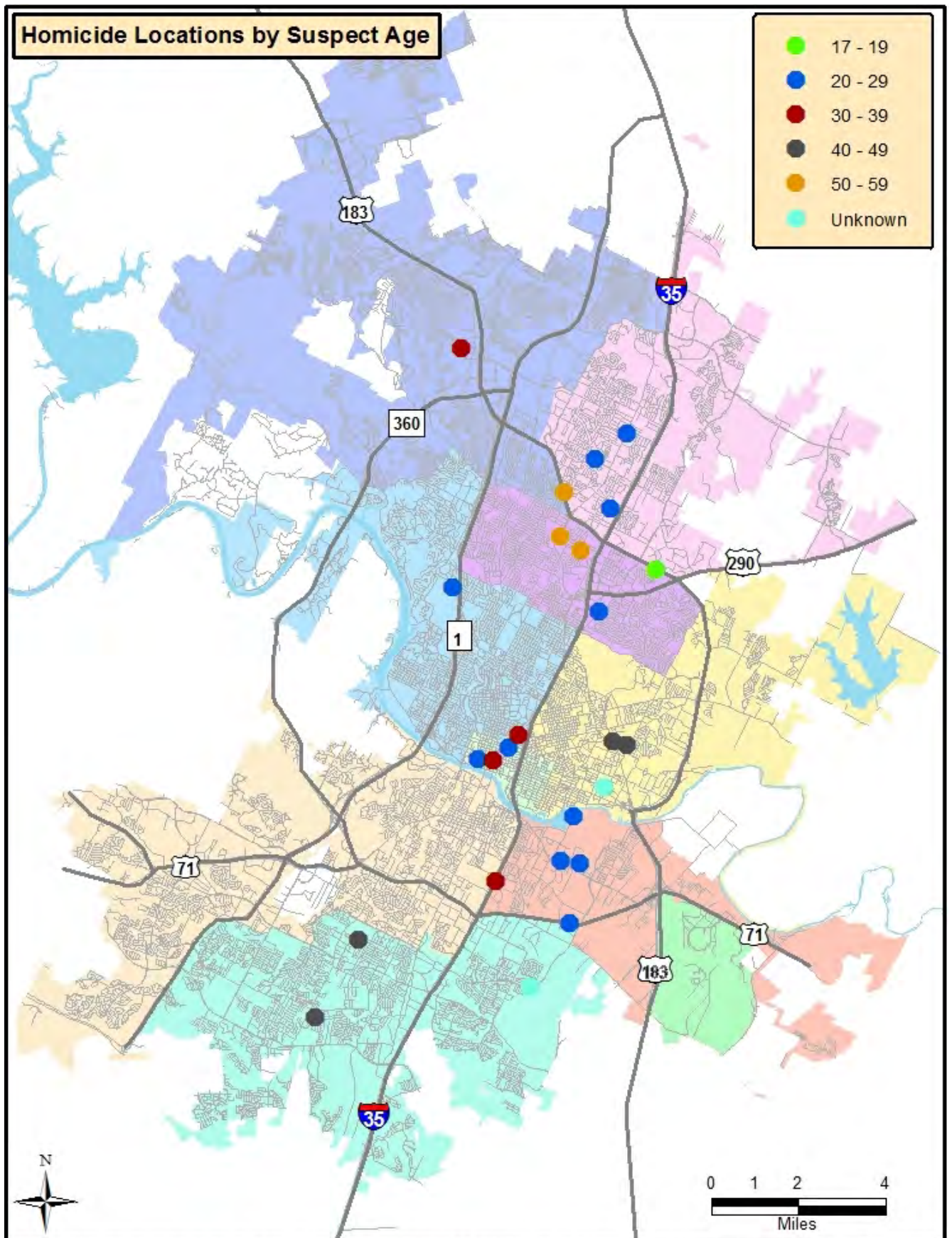- Family Violence
- Robbery
- Other
- Unknown

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Homicide Locations by Victim Age

Legend:
- 17 - 19
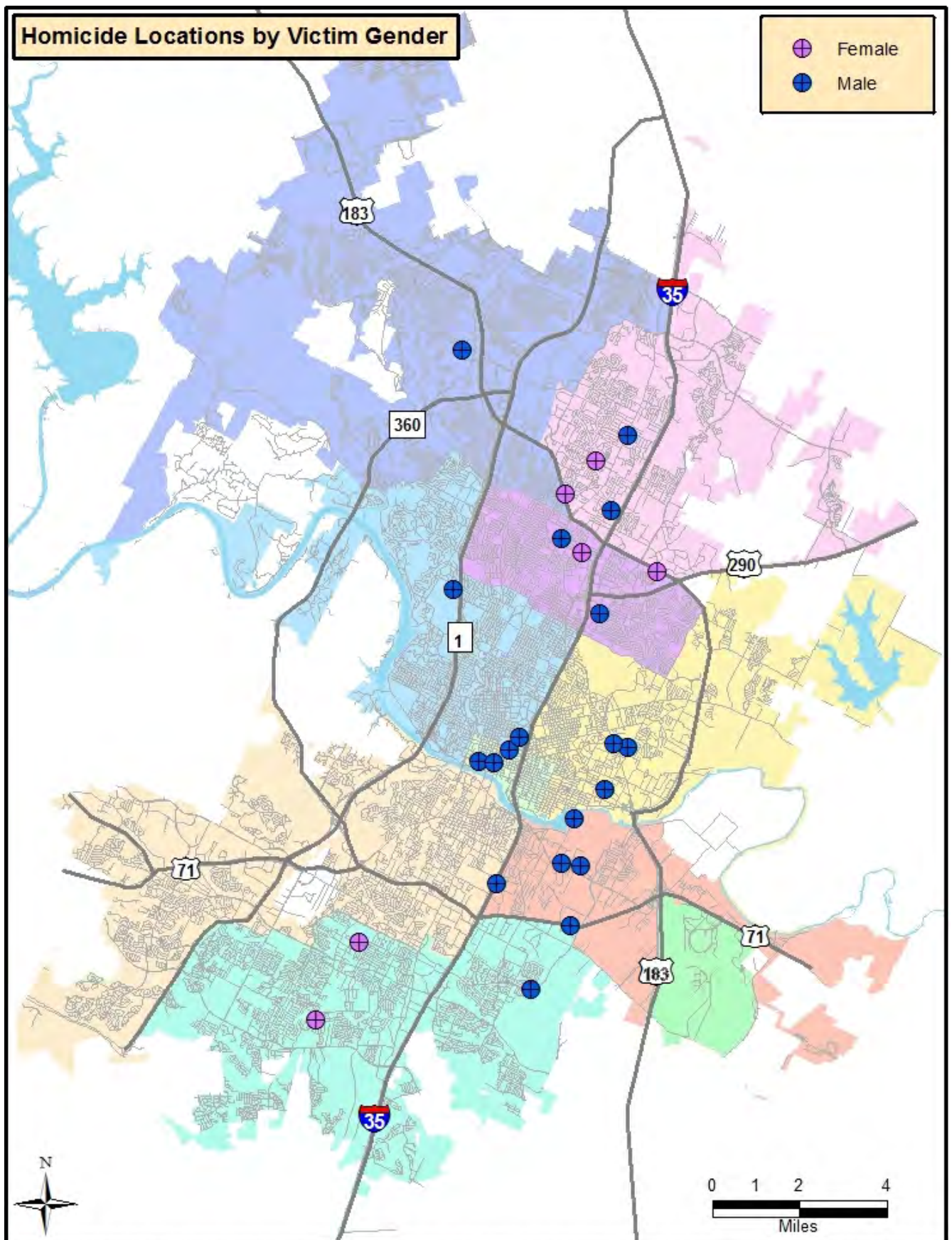- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 - 69

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Homicide Locations by Suspect Age

Legend:
- 17 - 19
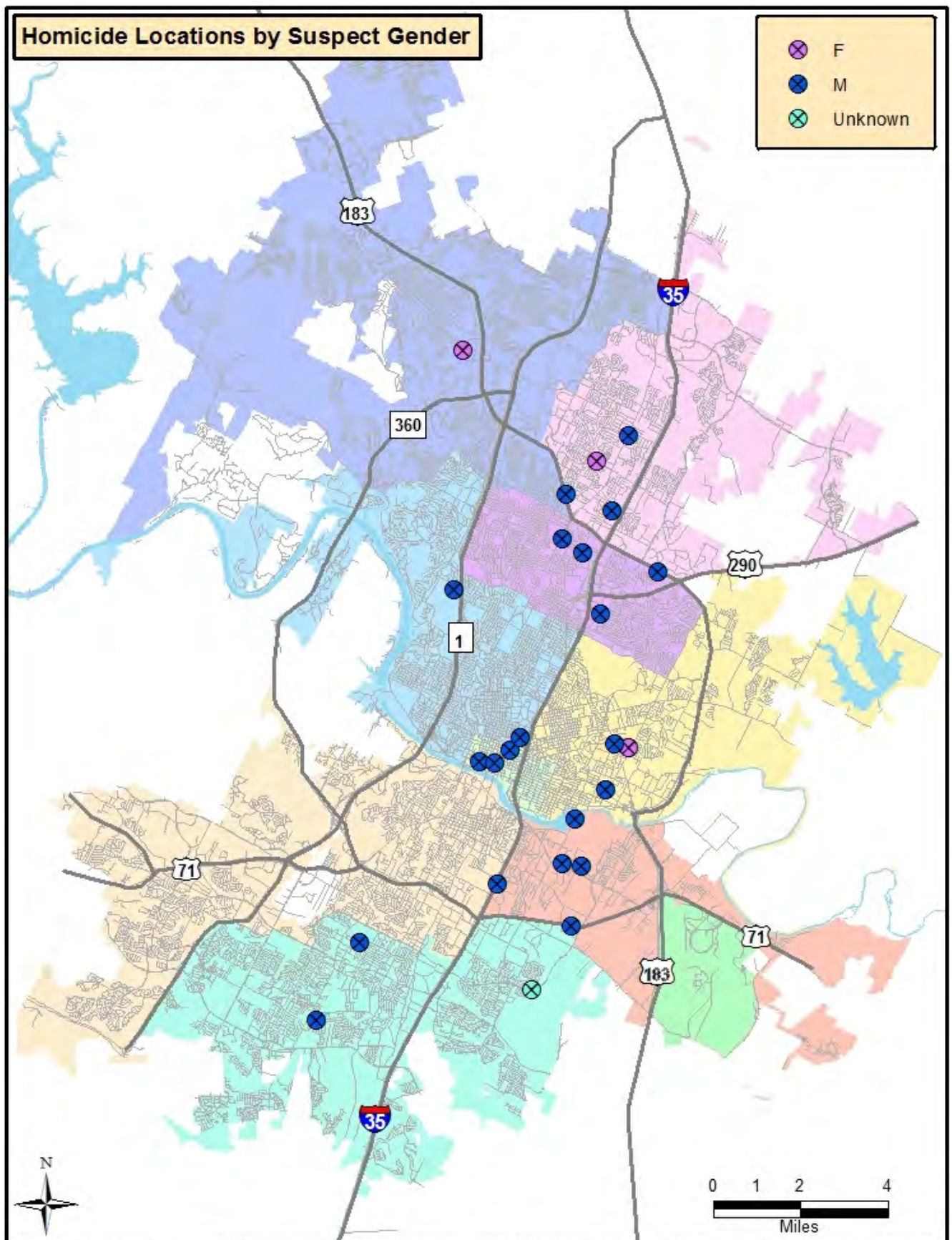- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- Unknown

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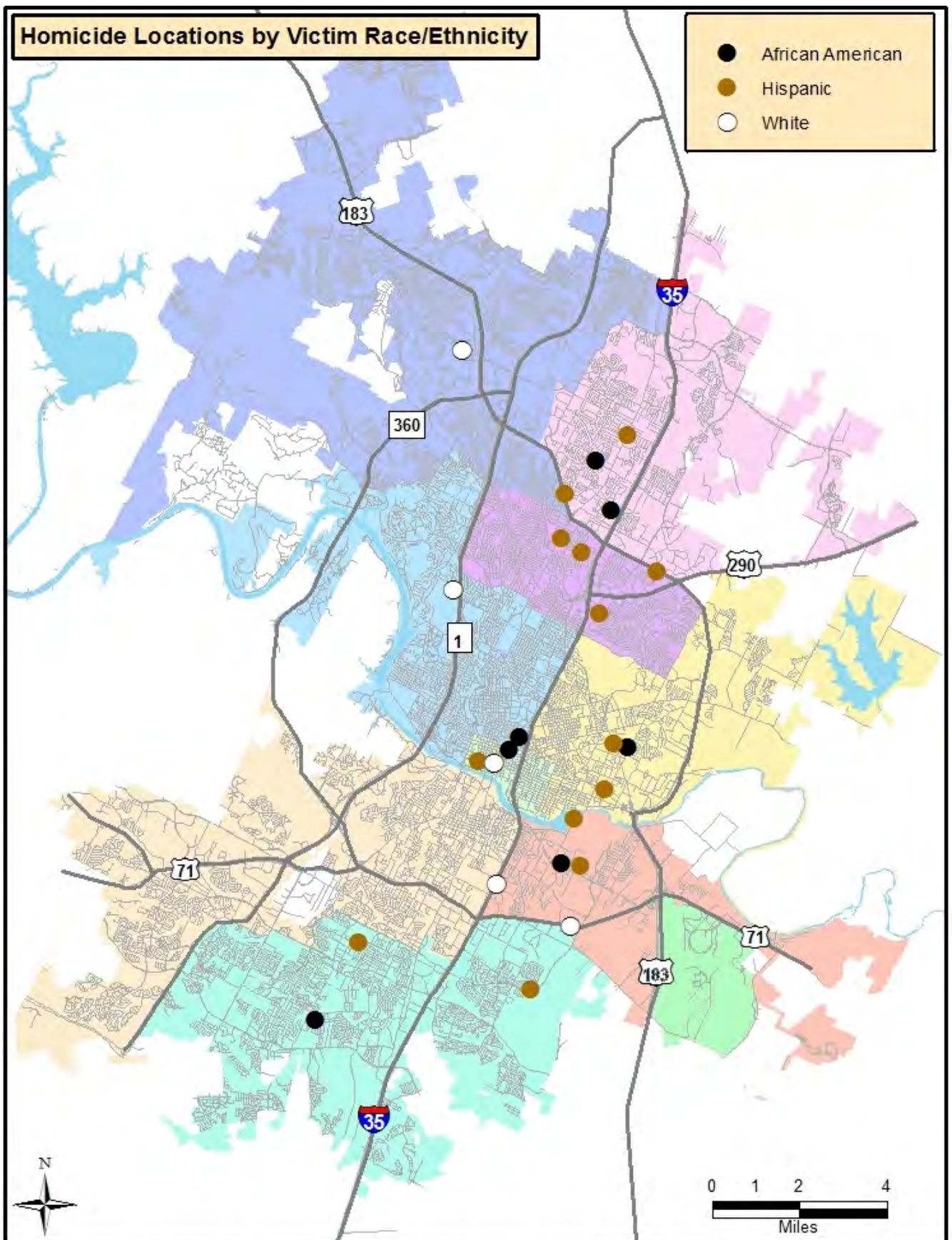
Homicide Locations by Victim Gender

Female
Male

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Homicide Locations by Suspect Gender
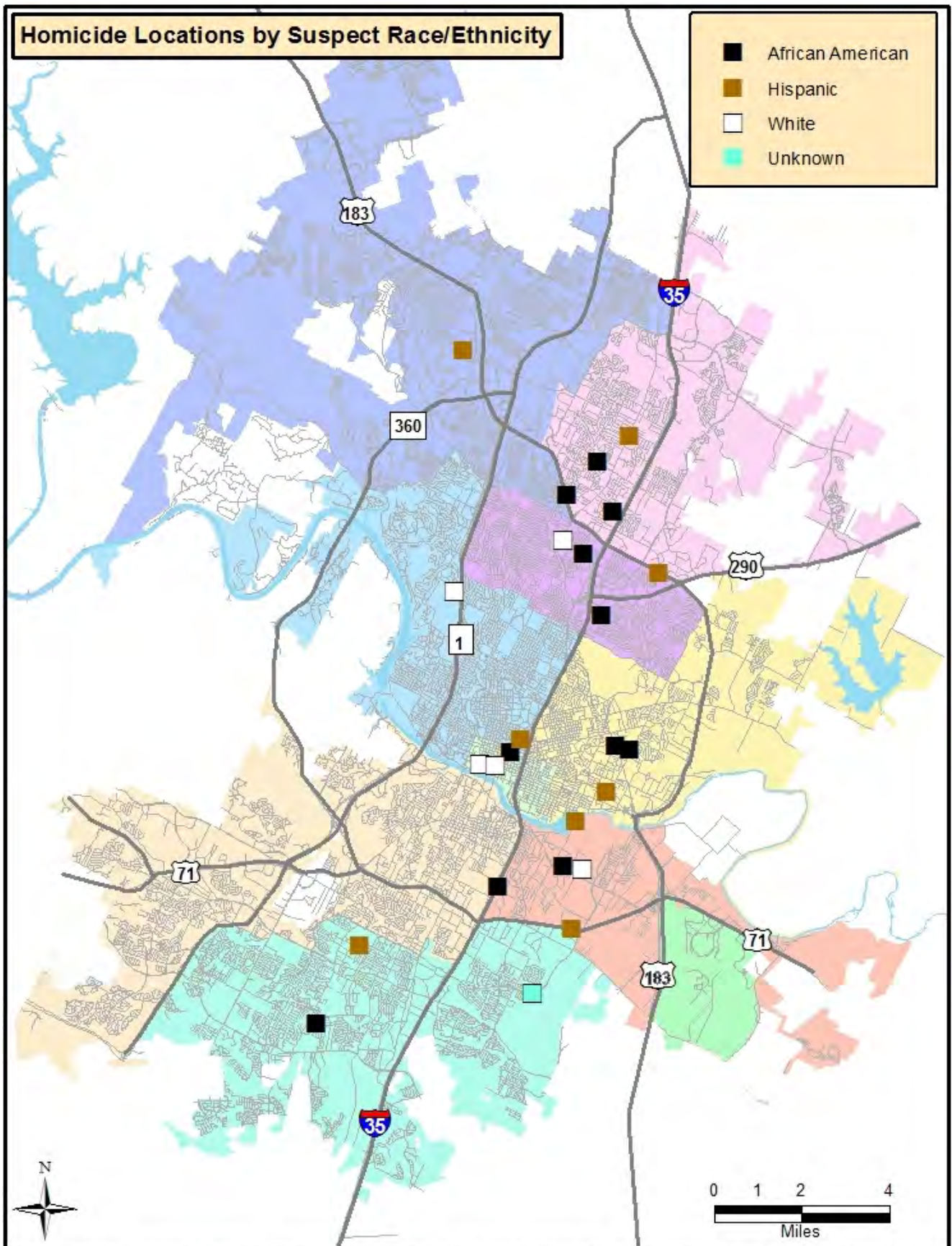
Legend:
- F
- M
- Unknown

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Homicide Locations by Victim Race/Ethnicity

Legend:
- African American (black)
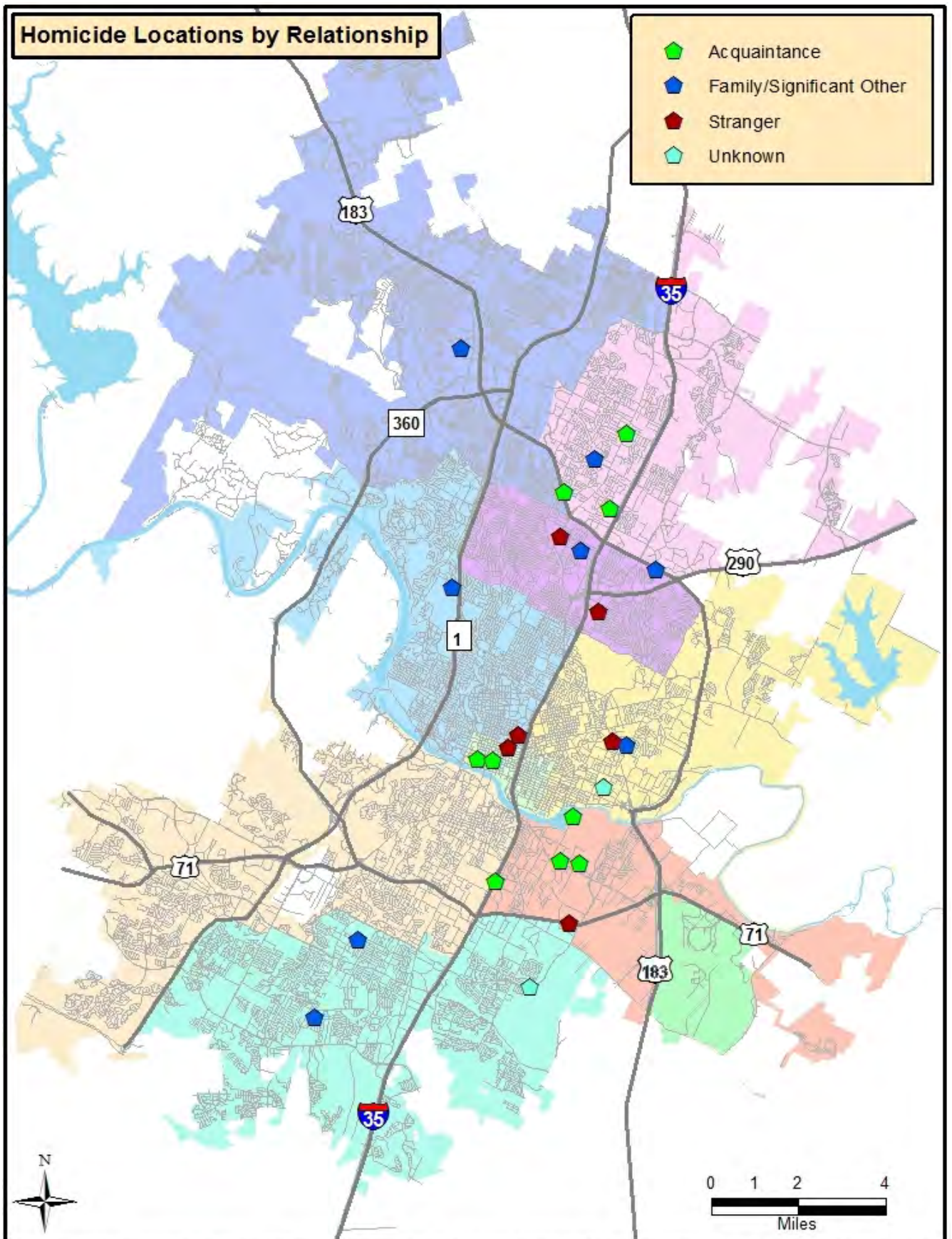- Hispanic (brown)
- White (white)

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Homicide Locations by Suspect Race/Ethnicity

Legend:
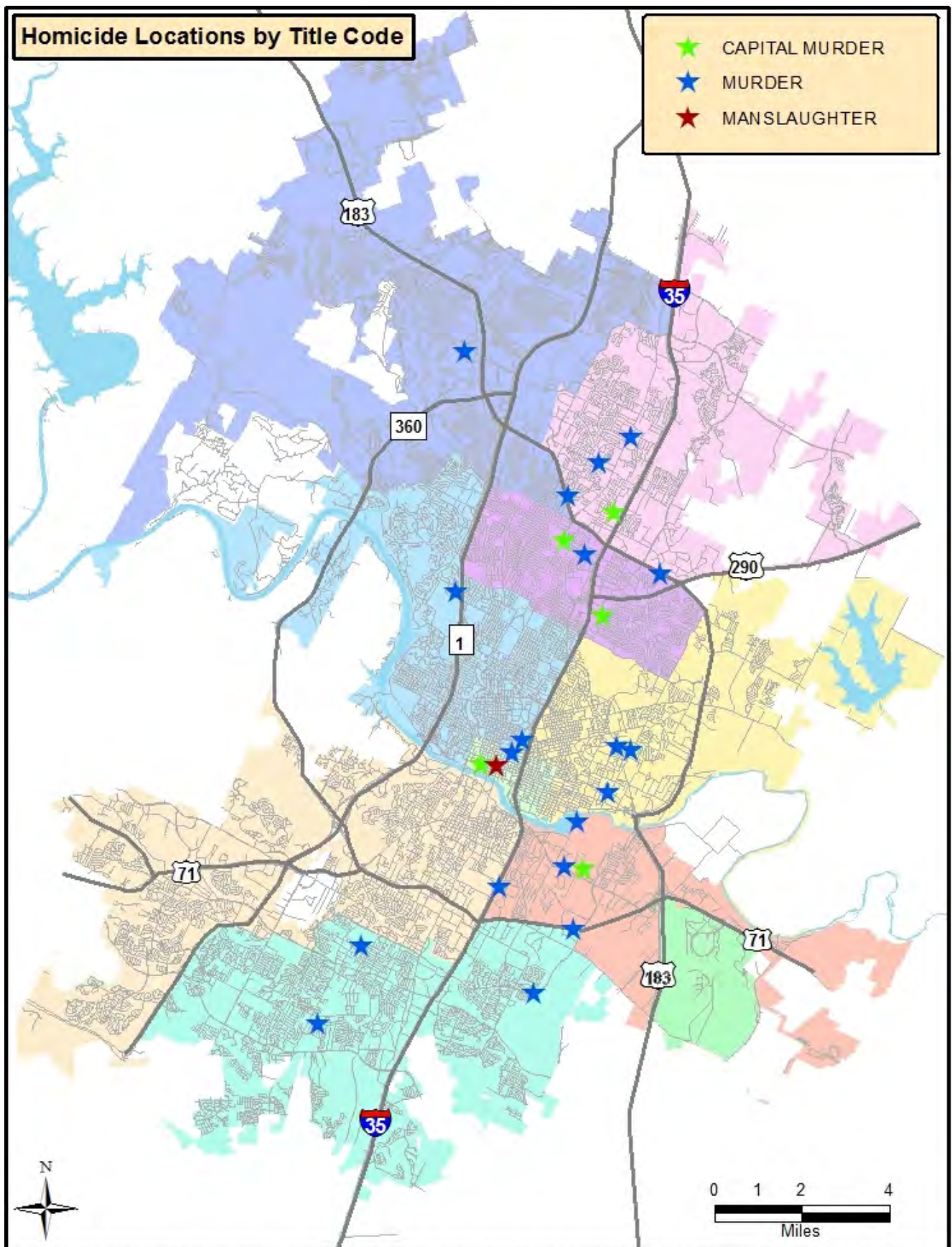- African American
- Hispanic
- White
- Unknown

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Homicide Locations by Relationship

Legend:
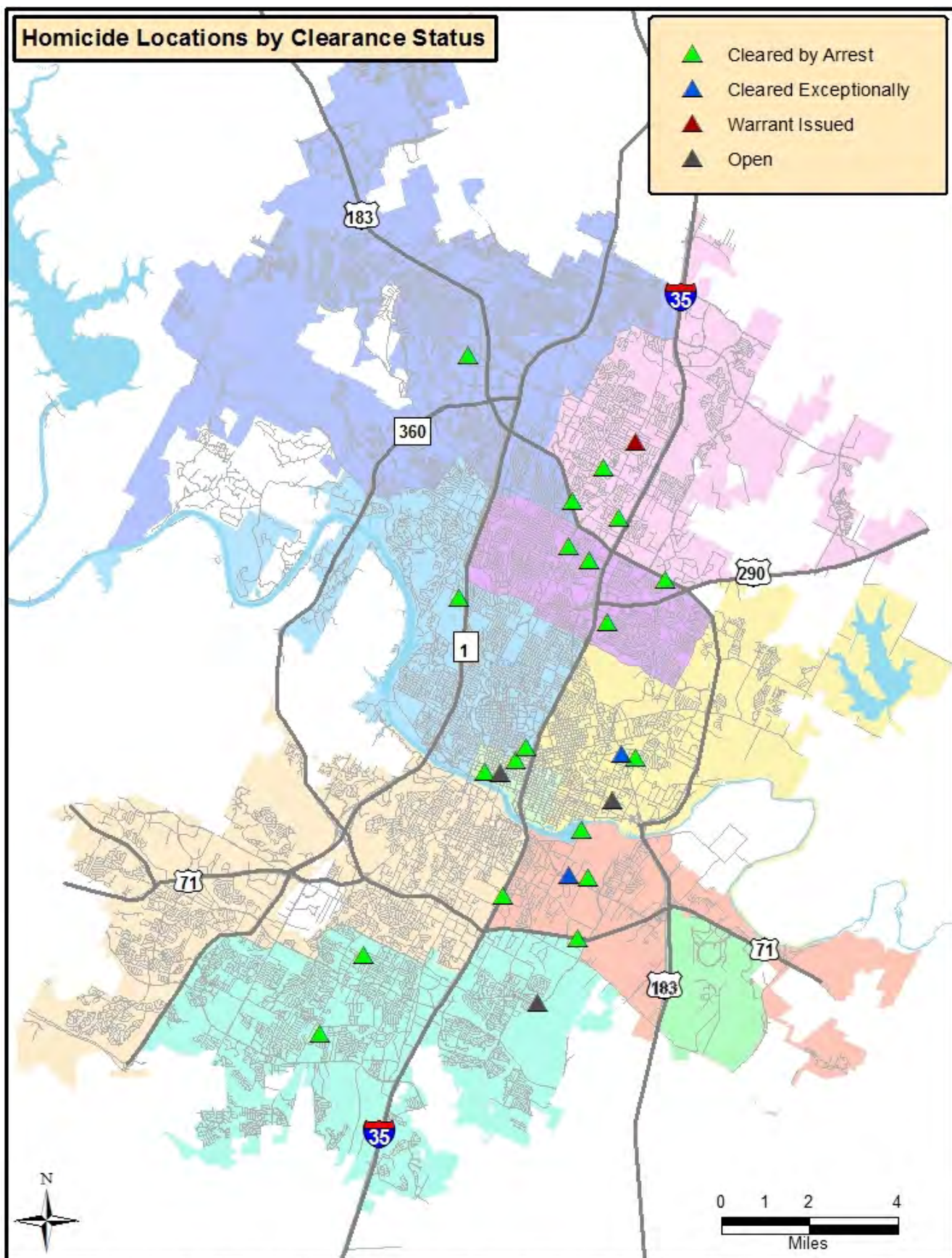- Acquaintance
- Family/Significant Other
- Stranger
- Unknown

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Homicide Locations by Title Code

CAPITAL MURDER
MURDER
MANSLAUGHTER

183
360
290
1
71
183
71
35

N

0 1 2 4
Miles

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Homicide Locations by Clearance Status

Legend:
- ▲ Cleared by Arrest
- ▲ Cleared Exceptionally
- ▲ Warrant Issued
- ▲ Open

0   1   2   4
Miles

N

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