
An Analysis of Austin, Texas Homicide: Offenses, Victims, and Suspects in 2019

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Crime Analysis Unit
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Introduction

The following data reflects all non-negligent murder cases reported to the Austin Police Department for 2019. Negligent homicides and officer involved shootings 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 2018*, Texas Department of Public Safety's *2018 Crime in Texas Report*, 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 2019 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 2018 data was used for this report. These numbers are provided as a way to put Austin's murder numbers into a broader 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 2019 homicide data as of July 10, 2020.

- There were 33 homicides in Austin in 2019 for a rate of 3.4 murders per 100,000 population.
- Nine (28%) homicides occurred in Edward sector, seven (21%) occurred in Frank sector, and six (18%) occurred in Charlie sector. These three sectors account for a total of 67% of 2019's homicides. George sector had 4 homicides in 2019 but had no homicides in 2018.
- Sixteen (49%) of the homicides occurred at a single-family residence, apartment, or extended stay motel. Of those, 13 occurred inside the residence, apartment, or motel room.
- A gun was used in 20 of the 33 murders, accounting for 61% of the weapon types used in the 2019 murders.
- Nine (27%) of the 2019 murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Eleven (33%) of the cases met the legal requirements for family violence.
- A total of 33 victims and 42 suspects were documented for the 2019 murders.
- Fifteen (45%) of the victims were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Twenty-six (62%) of the known suspects were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Fourteen (42%) of the homicide victims in 2019 were Hispanic, twelve (36%) were Black, and seven (21%) were White.
- The race/ethnicity was known for 39 of the 42 suspects - 18 (43%) of the homicide suspects were Black, 16 (38%) were Hispanic, and 5 (12%) were White.
- In the 32 cases in which the suspect's relationship to the victim was established, at least one suspect was an acquaintance in 16 murders (49%). The suspect was a family member or significant other in eleven cases (33%).
- Five of the total 33 murders (15%) were considered stranger-on-stranger murders.
 - These murders include a case in which the victim was chosen opportunistically for a robbery or an incident of road rage, as well as cases in which the victim and suspect were brought together by a location (such as a bar or parking lot) or an activity (such as buying drugs, prostitution, or gambling).
 - As of July 10, 2020, four of the known stranger-on-stranger murders have been solved – three were cleared by arrest and a warrant was issued in another case (this suspect also committed a murder in 2020 and is believed to have fled to Mexico). The robbery case is still unsolved.
- Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in eleven (33%) of the 2019 homicides. Nine (82%) of these robberies were drug related.
- Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 15 (45%) of the homicides. Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 59% of the 2018 homicides.
- As of July 10, 2020, 28 of the 33 murders in 2019 have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for an 85% clearance rate.

Statistical Representation

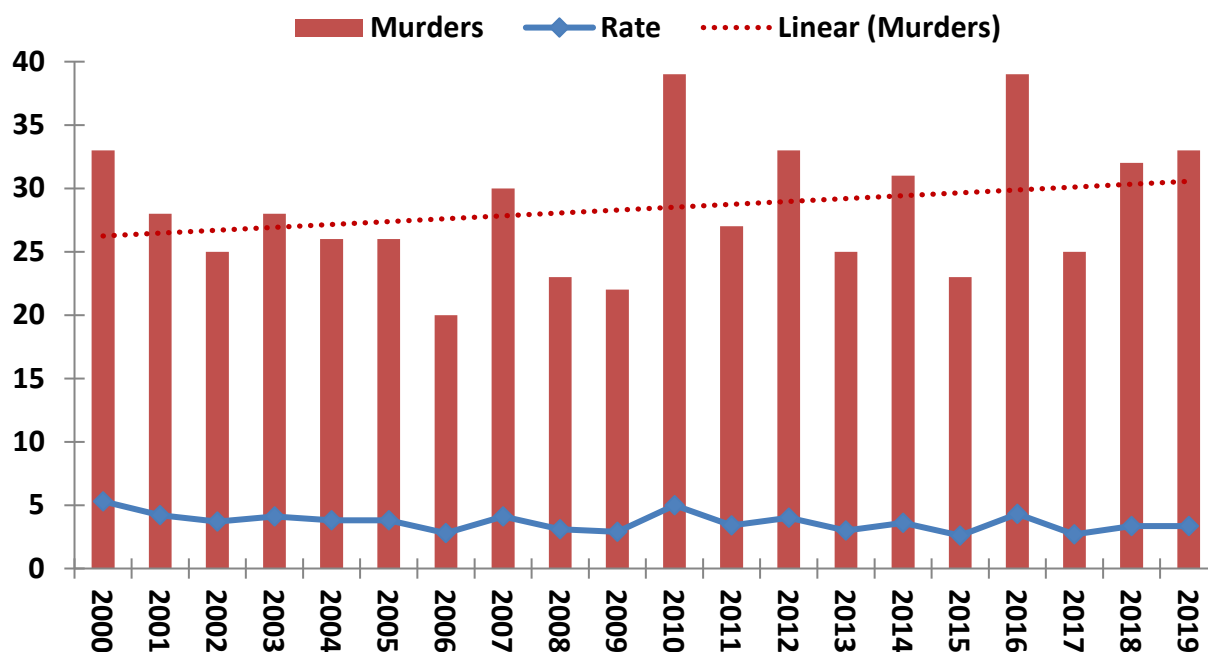
Homicide Data

- The analysis contained in this report was based on 2019 homicide data as of July 10, 2020. Only intentional homicides (non-negligent homicides) were included in the analysis.

Homicide Totals by Year

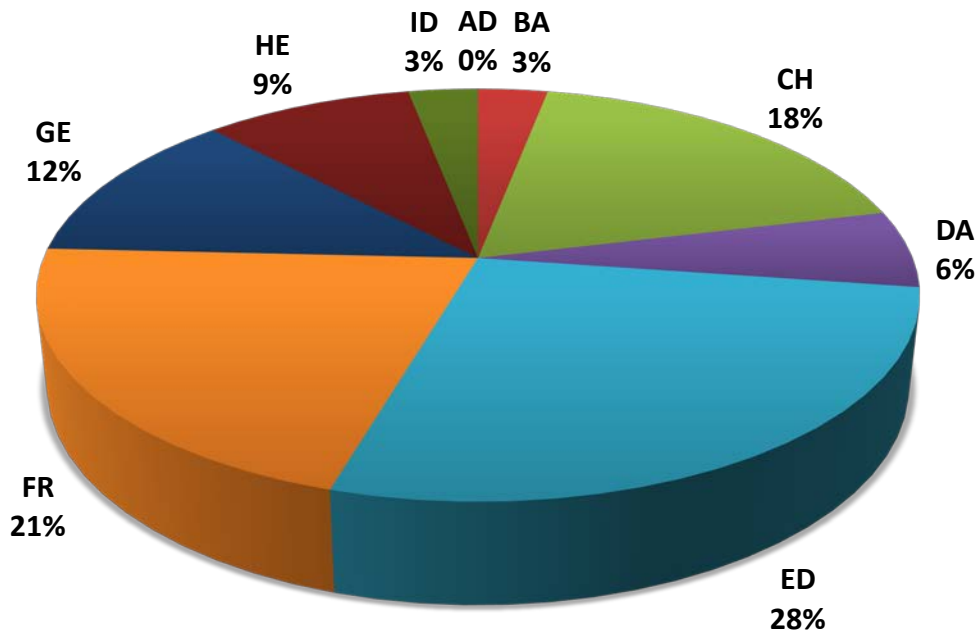
- There were 33 homicides documented in Austin, Texas in 2019. Using a population estimate of 972,499, this calculates to a rate of 3.4 murders per 100,000 population.
- In 2018, there were 32 homicides in Austin, 3.4 murders per 100,000 population.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice's *2018 Crime in the United States* report:
 - The homicide rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 11.9 per 100,000 population.
 - The homicide rate for all of the United States was 5.0 per 100,000 population.
- According to the Texas Department of Public Safety's *2018 Crime in Texas Report*, the homicide rate for all of Texas was 4.6 per 100,000 population.
- Austin's homicide rate per 100,000 population has remained at or below 5.0 since 2001 although the actual number of murders show a slight increase during this time frame.

Austin, TX Homicides and Rates by Year

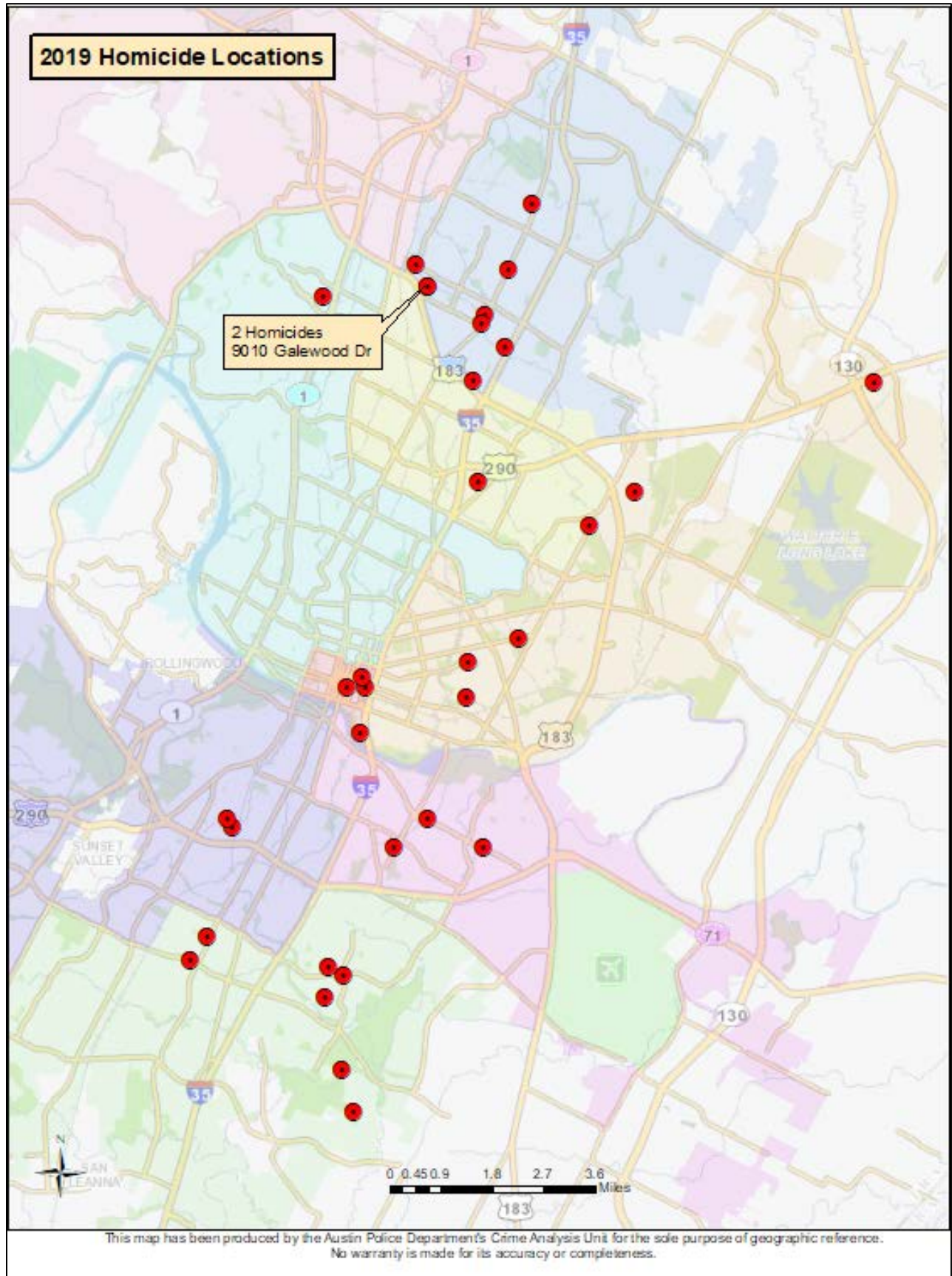


Homicides by Area Command

- Nine (28%) homicides occurred in Edward sector, seven (21%) occurred in Frank sector, and six (18%) occurred in Charlie sector. These three sectors account for a total of 67% of 2019's homicides.
- The rest of the sectors had one to four homicides except Adam sector which had no homicides during 2019.
- George sector had 4 homicides in 2019 but had no homicides in 2018.

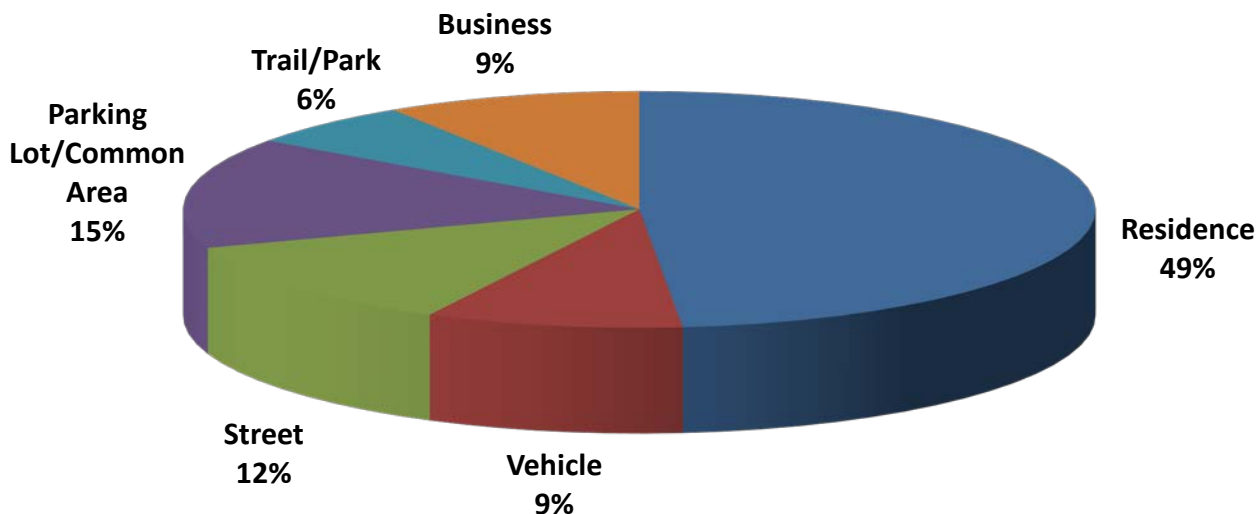


Homicides by Location – Point Map



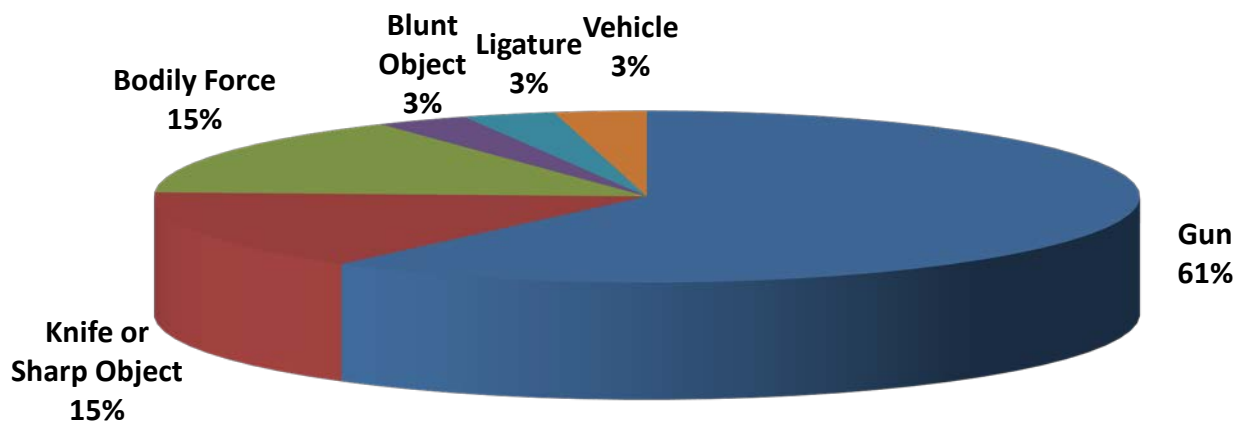
Homicides by Type of Premise

- Sixteen (49%) of the homicides occurred at a single-family residence, apartment, or extended stay motel. Of those, 13 occurred inside the residence, apartment, or motel room.
- Five homicides (15%) occurred in a parking lot or common area (four of those in apartment complex parking lots or common areas) and three (9%) occurred in or outside a business.
- Four (12%) homicides occurred on the street and three (9%) occurred inside vehicles.
- Two (6%) occurred in a park or on a hike/bike trail.



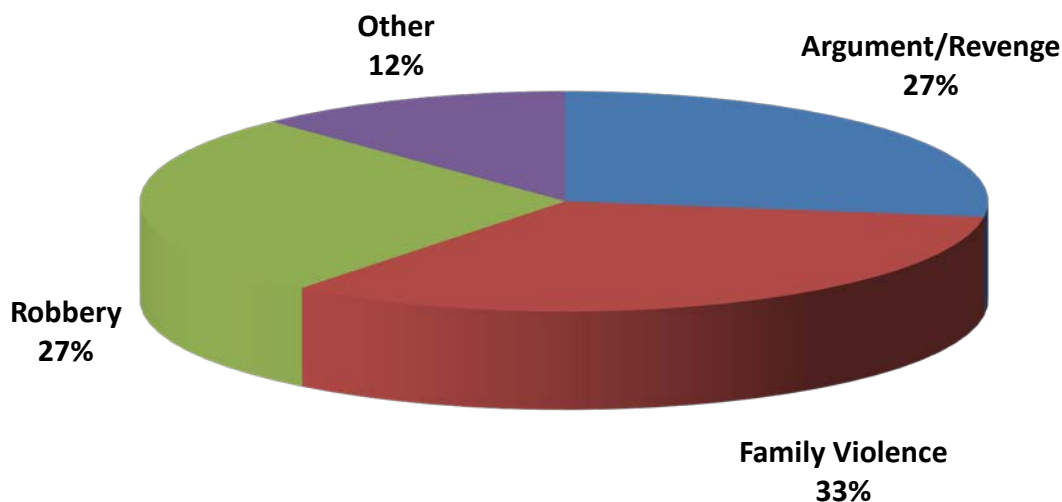
Types of Weapons Used

- A gun was used in 20 of the 33 murders, accounting for 61% of the weapon types used in the 2019 murders. A gun accounted for 63% of the weapon types used in 2018 murders.
- Bodily force was used in five cases (15%) and a knife or a sharp object was used in five cases (15%).



Homicide Motives

- Nine (27%) of the 2019 murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Eleven (33%) of the cases met the legal requirements for family violence (motivated by issues stemming from a close family member, intimate partner, or ex-partner relationship). In 2018, 22% of the cases met the legal requirements for family violence.
 - Seven of the eleven family violence murders were committed by intimate partners or ex-partners. Two of these cases were murder-suicides.
 - Four of the eleven family violence murders were committed by family members.
- Robbery was the motive in nine homicides (27%). Seven of these were drug related robberies. Robbery was the motive in 22% of the 2018 murders and they were all drug related.
- Other motives were determined in four (12%) of the 33 murders that occurred in 2019.
 - These murders include two manslaughter cases – one was a juvenile smoking marijuana and playing with a gun who accidentally shot his friend and the other was a transient holding down another transient who had stolen his wallet.
 - One case involved a friend shooting another friend after smoking crack.
 - One case was a friend who wanted to kidnap the victim's baby.



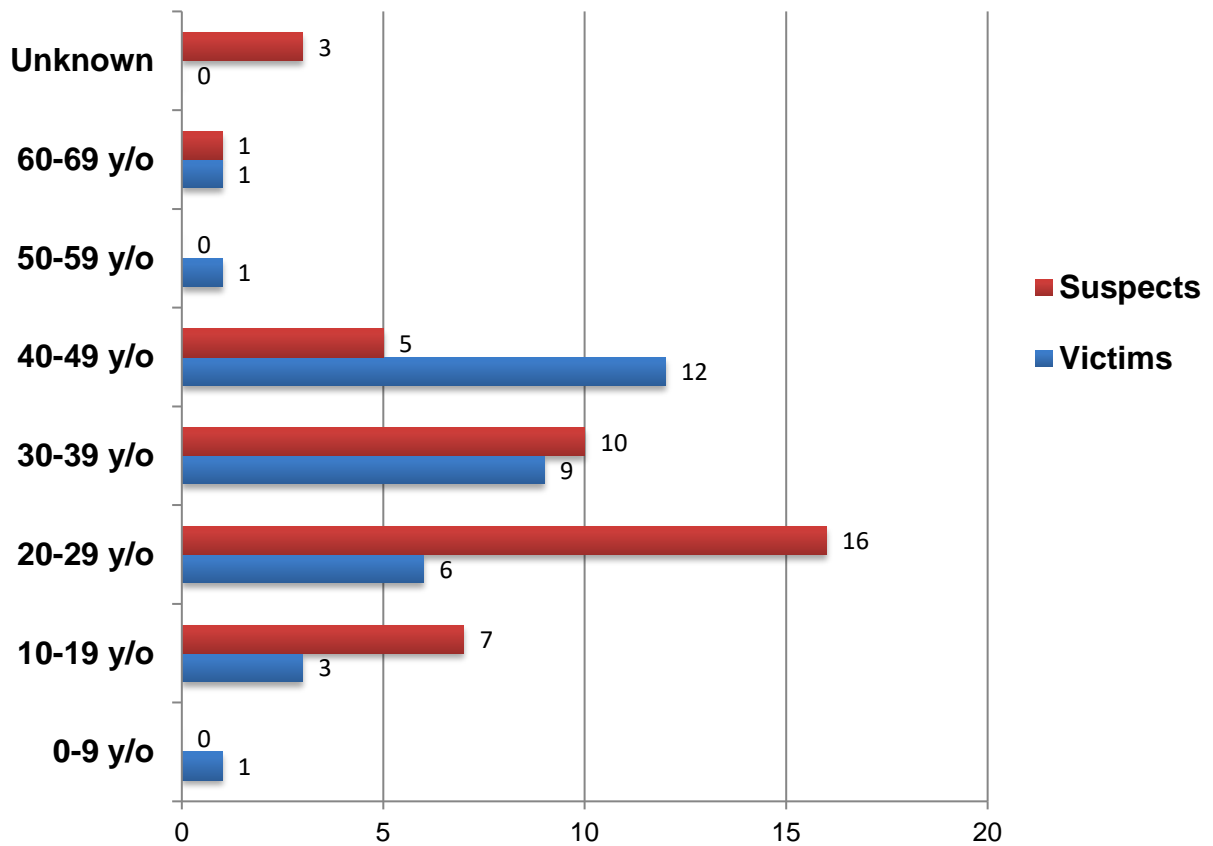
Note: Percentages in this chart total 99% as the individual categories are rounded numbers.

Victims & Suspects

- A total of 33 victims and 42 suspects were documented for the 2019 murders.

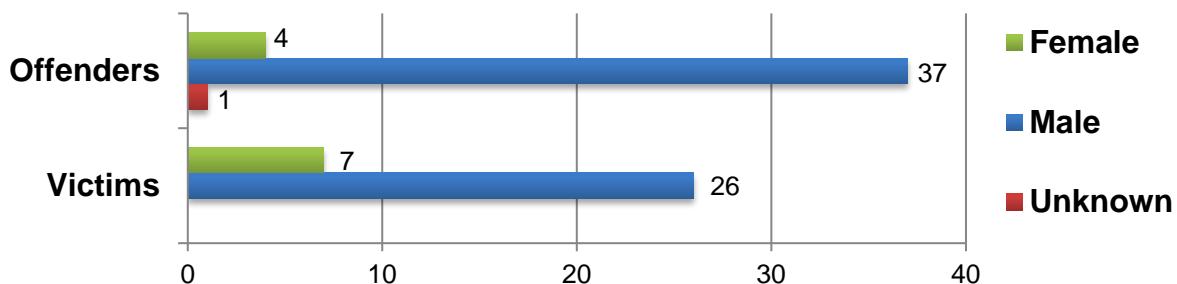
Homicides by Age

- The youngest victim was 0 years old (unborn) and the oldest was 66 years old, with 15 of the victims (45%) falling between the ages of 20 and 39.
- In the cases in which the suspect's age was known, the youngest suspect was 13 years old and the oldest was 63 years old, with 26 of the suspects (62%) falling between the ages of 20 and 39.



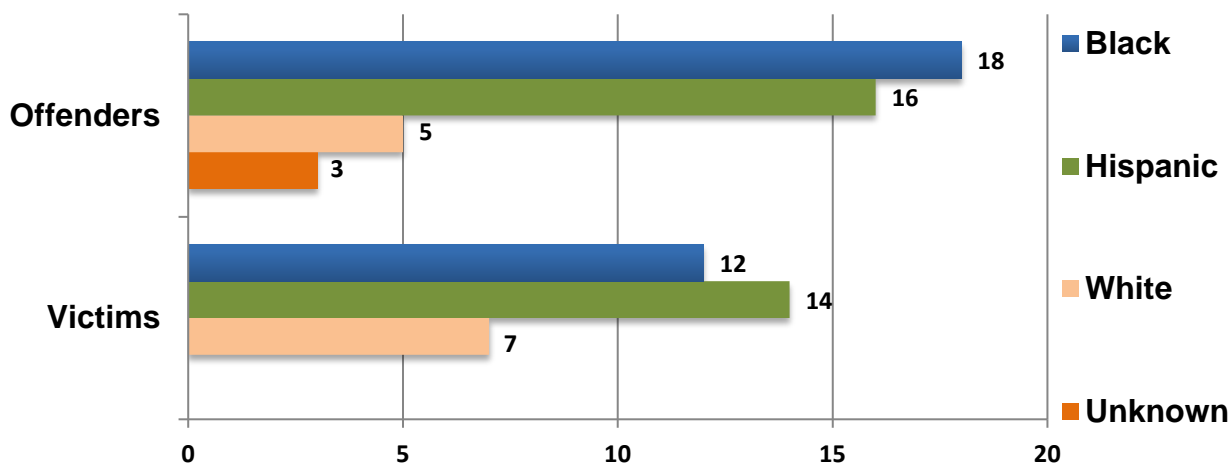
Homicides by Gender

- Twenty-six males (79%) were victims in 2019.
- The suspect's gender was known for 41 of the 42 total suspects. Thirty-seven of the known suspects were males (88%).



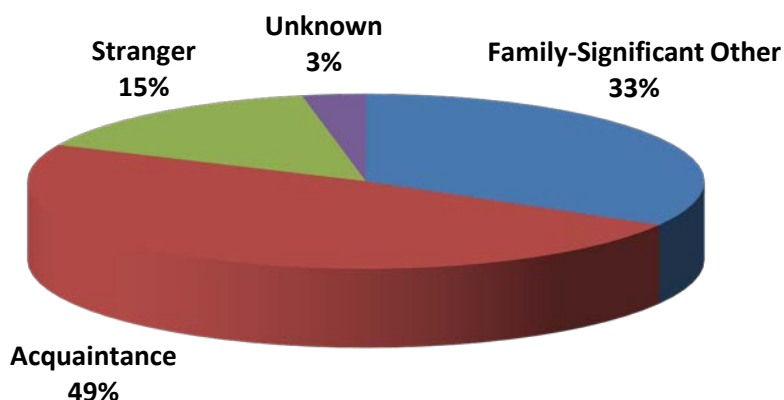
Homicides by Race/Ethnicity

- Fourteen (42%) of the homicide victims in 2019 were Hispanic, twelve (36%) were Black, and seven (21%) were White.
 - Five of the victims were Mexican Nationals, one was from Guatemala, one was from Honduras, one was from Nigeria, one was from Algeria, and one was from Cuba.
 - Five of these cases were the result of family violence and in one case the victim and suspect grew up in the same town in their home country.
 - Two cases involved drugs.
 - One case involved a bar fight.
 - One case was a robbery.
- The race/ethnicity was known for 39 of the 42 suspects - 18 (43%) of the homicide suspects were Black, 16 (38%) were Hispanic, and 5 (12%) were White.
 - Four suspects were Mexican Nationals, one was from Nigeria, and one was from Cuba.



Relationship between Victim and Suspect

- The relationship between victim and suspect(s) was established in 32 of the 33 murders in 2019, while the relationship was undetermined in one (3%) murder.
- At least one suspect was an acquaintance in 16 murders (49%).
- The suspect was a family member or significant other in eleven cases (33%).
- Five of these 33 murders (15%) were considered stranger-on-stranger murders.
 - These five murders include two cases in which the victim was chosen at random (including a robbery attempt and a road rage incident).
 - In two cases, the victim and suspect were brought together by a location (such as a bar or parking lot) or an activity (such as buying drugs, prostitution, or gambling) – in 2019, one case involved a bar and the other case involved drugs.
 - In the other case, the victim stole the suspect's wallet and was killed when the suspect was holding him down waiting for the police to arrive.
 - As of July 10, 2020, four of the stranger-on-stranger murders have been solved – three were cleared by arrest and a warrant was issued in another but the suspect is believed to have fled to Mexico. The robbery case is still unsolved.



Miscellaneous Victim and Suspect Information

- At least three victims were transients. At least five of the known suspects were transients.
- At least one of the known suspects was possibly a gang member.
- At least seven of the murder victims were believed to be drug dealers and at least five suspects are believed to be drug dealers.
- Two of the homicides were murder/suicides.
- Six of the homicides involved multiple suspects.
- One case involved kidnapping.

Family Violence, Contributing Factors, Offense Classification

- Eleven (33%) of the murders met the Texas Penal Code & Family Code definition for family violence.
 - Seven were committed by an intimate partner or ex-partner. Two were murder-suicides.
 - Four were committed by a family member.
- Alcohol was believed to be a contributing factor in four (12%) of the homicides.
- Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in eleven (33%) of the 2019 homicides. Nine (82%) of these robberies were drug related. Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in 22% of 2018 homicides.
- Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 15 (45%) of the homicides. Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 59% of the 2018 homicides.
- Prostitution was believed to be a contributing factor in one (3%) of the homicides.
- Offense classifications are determined using the facts of the murder investigation in conjunction with mitigating and/or aggravating factors or circumstances.
 - Four (12%) of the homicides were designated as Capital Murder as of July 10, 2020. A homicide can be designated as Capital Murder if it includes the commission of an additional felony at the time of the murder (three of these three cases involved robbery and one involved kidnapping), 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.
 - Three (9%) of the homicides were designated as Manslaughter as of July 10, 2020. A person commits Manslaughter if he/she recklessly causes the death of an individual. One of these three cases involved a gun that was handled recklessly. Two of these cases had drugs and/or alcohol as a contributing factor.

Homicide Clearance Rate

- As of July 10, 2020, 28 of the 33 murders in 2019 have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for an 85% clearance rate.
 - Twenty-five of the 33 cases were cleared during 2019. Three were cleared in January of 2020.
 - Of the five murders in 2019 that are considered “not cleared”, two have warrants issued and in both cases the suspects are believed to have fled to Mexico. One case has probable suspects identified but further investigation is needed. Two cases have not been solved to date - the suspect(s) have not been identified.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice’s *2018 Crime in the United States* report:
 - The homicide clearance rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 55.7%. **This includes all homicide cases that were cleared during 2018 regardless of when the murder occurred.**
 - The homicide clearance rate for all of the United States was 62.3%.
- According to the Texas Department of Public Safety’s *2018 Crime in Texas Report*, the clearance rate for murder for all of Texas was 58.5%.
- As of July 10, 2020 (in addition to the twenty-five 2019 murders that were cleared during 2019), four cases from previous years were also cleared - for a total of 29 murder cases cleared during 2019. Based on 33 murders occurring in 2019 and 29 murder cases being cleared during 2019 – 88% is the total UCR clearance rate for homicide cases for Austin in 2019.
 - Three 2018 murder cases were cleared by arrest in January of 2019.
 - One 2016 murder case was cleared by arrest in April of 2019.