An Analysis of Austin, Texas Homicide: Offenses, Victims, and Suspects in 2014

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Introduction

The following data reflects all non-negligent murder cases reported to the Austin Police Department for 2014. 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 2013*, Texas Department of Public Safety's *2013 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 2014 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 2013 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 2014 homicide data as of April 16, 2015.

- There were 31 homicides in Austin in 2014 for a rate of 3.6 murders per 100,000 population.
- The most active months for murder were December with six murders and November with five murders.
- Six (19%) homicides occurred in Adam sector and Ida sector. These two sectors account for a total of 39% of 2014's homicides.
- Eighteen (58%) of the homicides occurred in a single-family residence or apartment.
- A gun was used in 13 cases (42%).
- Five (16%) of the murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Five (16%) of the cases met the requirements for family violence.
- A robbery motive accounted for four (13%) of the murders.
- A total of 31 victims and 38 suspects were documented for the 2014 murders.
- Fourteen victims (45%) were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Fifteen suspects (39%) were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Twelve (39%) of the homicide victims in 2014 were White, 11 (35%) were Hispanic, seven (23%) were African American, and one (3%) was Asian.
- Thirteen (34%) of the homicide suspects were African American, 11 (29%) were Hispanic, 10 (26%) were White, and one (3%) was Asian.
- At least one suspect was an acquaintance in 16 murders (52%). The suspect was a family member or significant other in five cases (16%).
- Three murders were considered stranger-on-stranger murders (10%).
  - 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 April 16, 2015, all of the stranger-on-stranger murders have been cleared.
  - None are believed to be related or committed by the same suspect(s).
- One of the homicides was a murder/suicide.
- One of the homicides was a double homicide – two victims killed during one episode.
- As of April 16, 2015, 21 of the 31 2014 murders have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for a 68% clearance rate.
  - Of the 2014 cases that are considered "not cleared":
    - Six of the murders are not solved. The suspects have not been identified.
    - A warrant for the suspect in one of the 2014 cases has been issued, but the suspect has not been arrested yet.
    - In three murders, the suspect is known but more investigation is required before a warrant can be issued.

Statistical Representation

Homicide Data

■ The analysis contained in this report was based on 2014 homicide data as of April 16, 2015. Only intentional homicides (non-negligent homicides) were included in the analysis.

Homicide Totals by Year

■ There were 31 homicides documented in Austin, Texas in 2014. Using a population estimate of 853,020, this calculates to a rate of 3.6 murders per 100,000 population.
■ In 2013, there were 25 homicides in Austin, 3.0 murders per 100,000 population.
■ According to the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States 2013* report:
  • The homicide rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 10.7 per 100,000 population.
  • The rate for the South Region was 5.3 per 100,000 population. The South Region includes: the South Atlantic states of Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia; the East South Central states of Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee; and the West South Central states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.
    o The rate for the West South Central sub-region was also 5.3 per 100,000 population.
  • The rate for all of the United States was 4.5 per 100,000 population.
■ According to the Texas Department of Public Safety's *2013 Crime in Texas Report*, the homicide rate for all of Texas was 4.4 per 100,000 population.
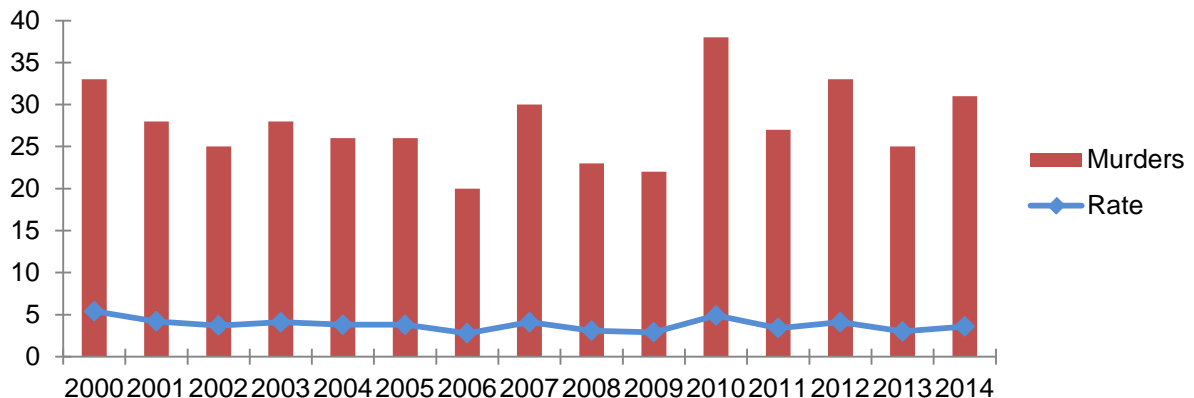
Homicide Totals by Month

- A few cases involved situations in which the victim was found hours, possibly 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 December with six murders and November with five murders.
- The least active month was May with zero murders.
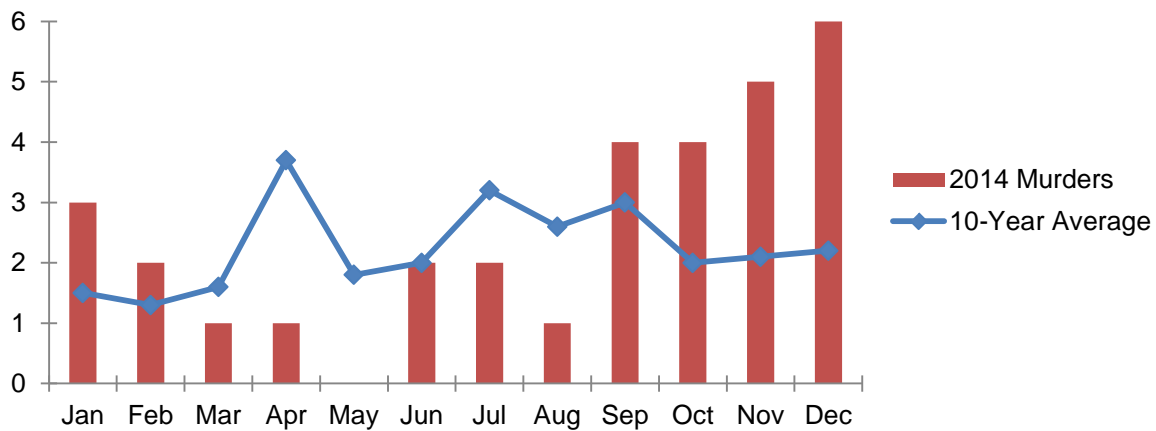

Homicides by Day of the Week

- Eight (26%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered on a Saturday and seven homicides occurred or were discovered on a Monday.
- Two (6%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered on a Friday.
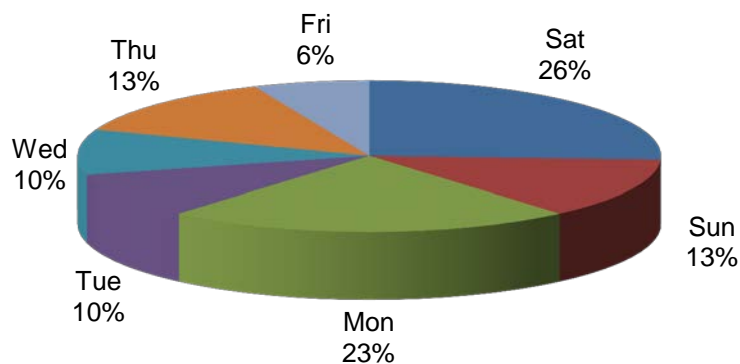
Homicides by Time of the Day

- Eleven (35%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered during overnight hours.
- Five (16%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered during afternoon 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.

Overnight
35%

Morning
19%

Afternoon
16%

Evening
29%
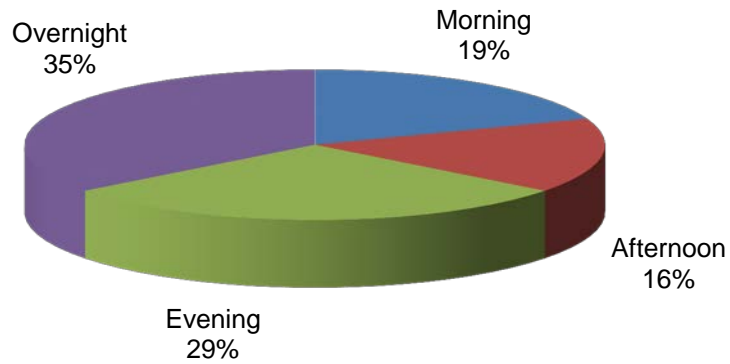
Homicides by Location – Point Map
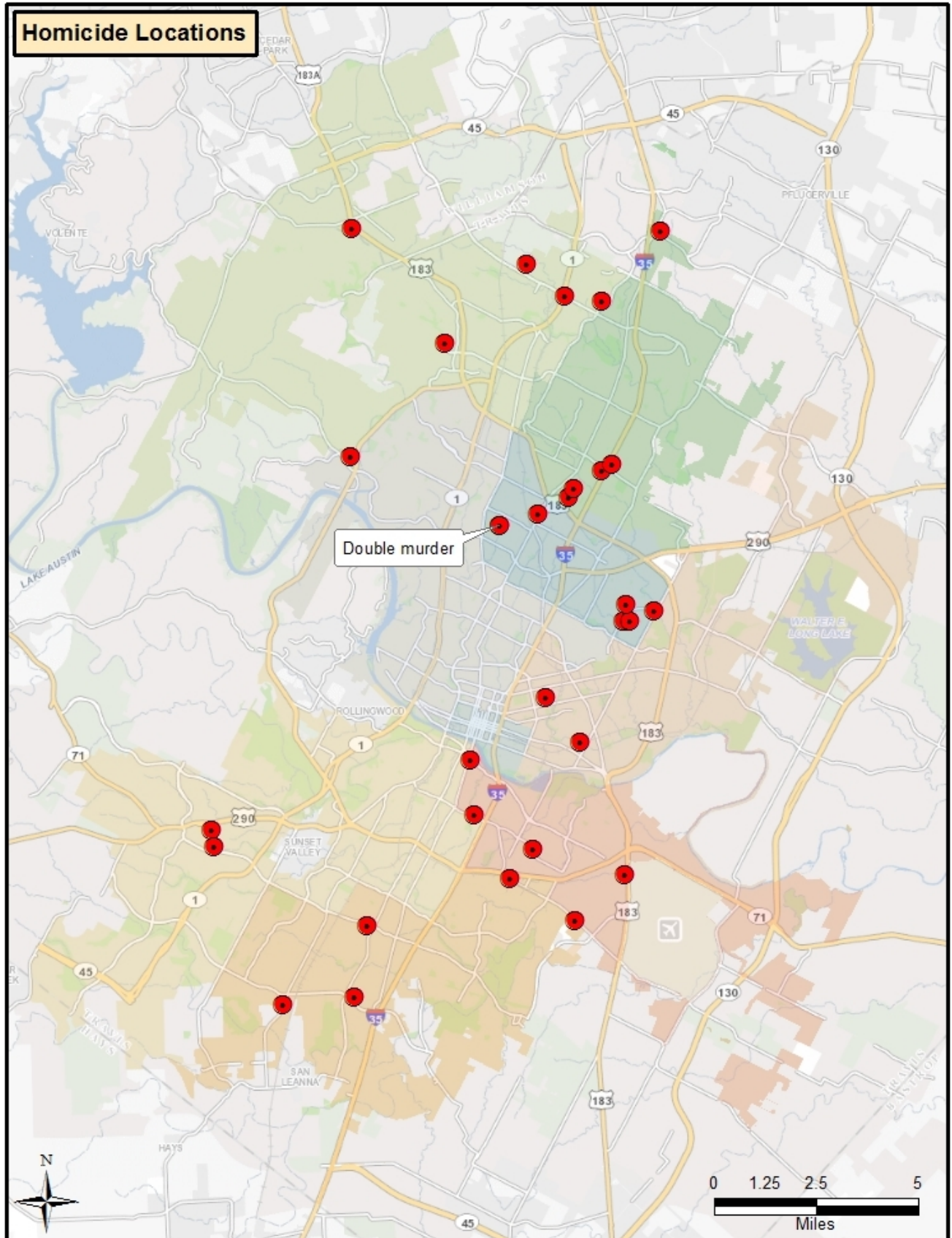


Homicide Locations

Double murder

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

- Six (19%) homicides occurred in Adam sector and Ida sector. These two sectors account for a total of 39% of 2014's homicides.
- No murders occurred in Baker sector or George sector.
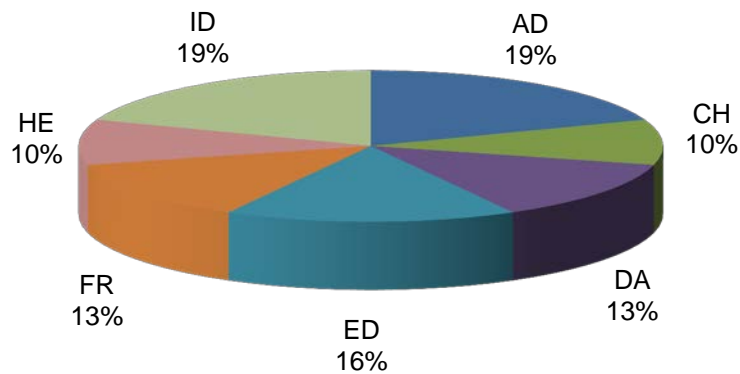
Homicides by Type of Premise

- Eighteen (58%) of the homicides occurred in a single-family residence or apartment. Of those, 14 occurred inside the residence or apartment.
- Two homicides (6%) occurred on or along a street.
- "Other" includes motel.
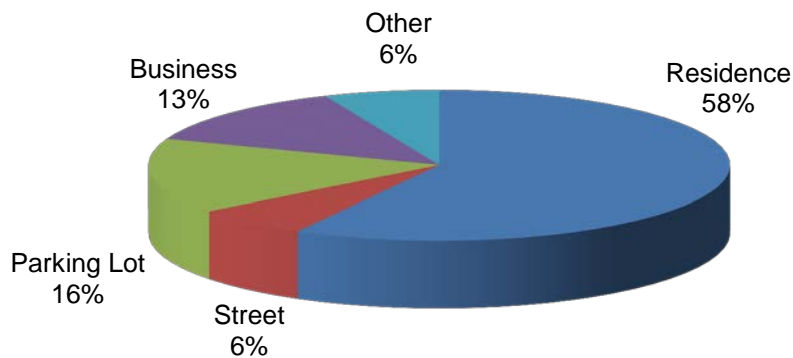
Types of Weapons Used

- A gun was used in 13 of the 31 murders, accounting for 42% of the weapon types used in the 2014 murders.
  - Ten of the guns were semi-automatic handguns, and one was a revolver.
- A knife or a sharp object was used in eight cases (26%).
- "Other" includes fire.
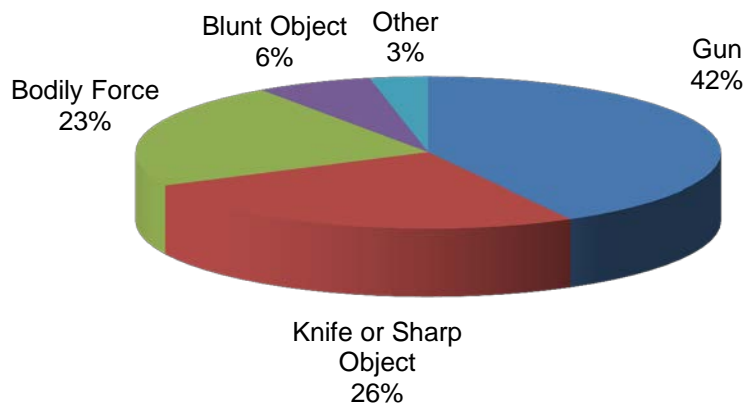
Homicide Motives

- Five (16%) of the murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Four (13%) 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.
  - Two of the cases involved intimate partners.
- A robbery motive accounted for four (13%) of the murders.
- One homicide (3%) was likely committed in defense of self or others.
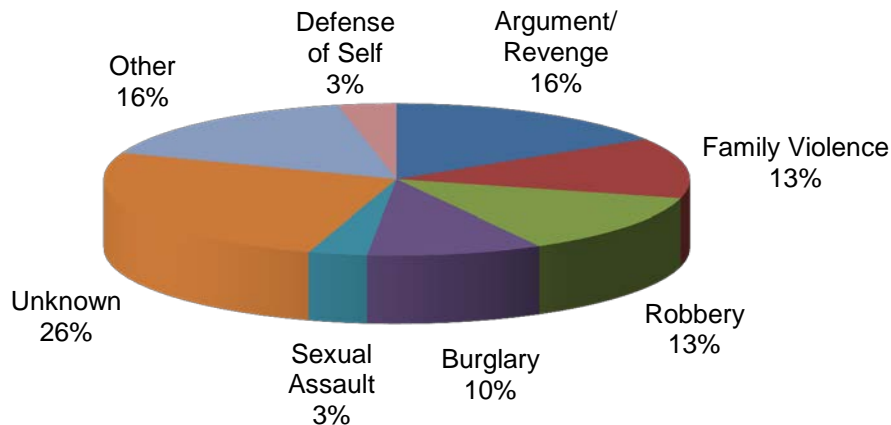
Victims & Suspects

■ A total of 31 victims and 38 suspects were documented for the 2014 murders.

Homicides by Age

■ The youngest victim was 2 years old and the oldest was 85 years old, with 14 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 16 years old and the oldest was 59 years old, with 15 of the suspects (39%) falling between the ages of 20 and 39.
■ One case involved an assault in 1990 in which the victim was 34 years old at the time. The victim did not die until 2014 at the age of 59. The victim's age at the time of his death was used for analysis. The suspect was 30 at the time of the assault and died in 1997. Since he was dead at the time of the victim's death, his age at the time of the assault was used for analysis.
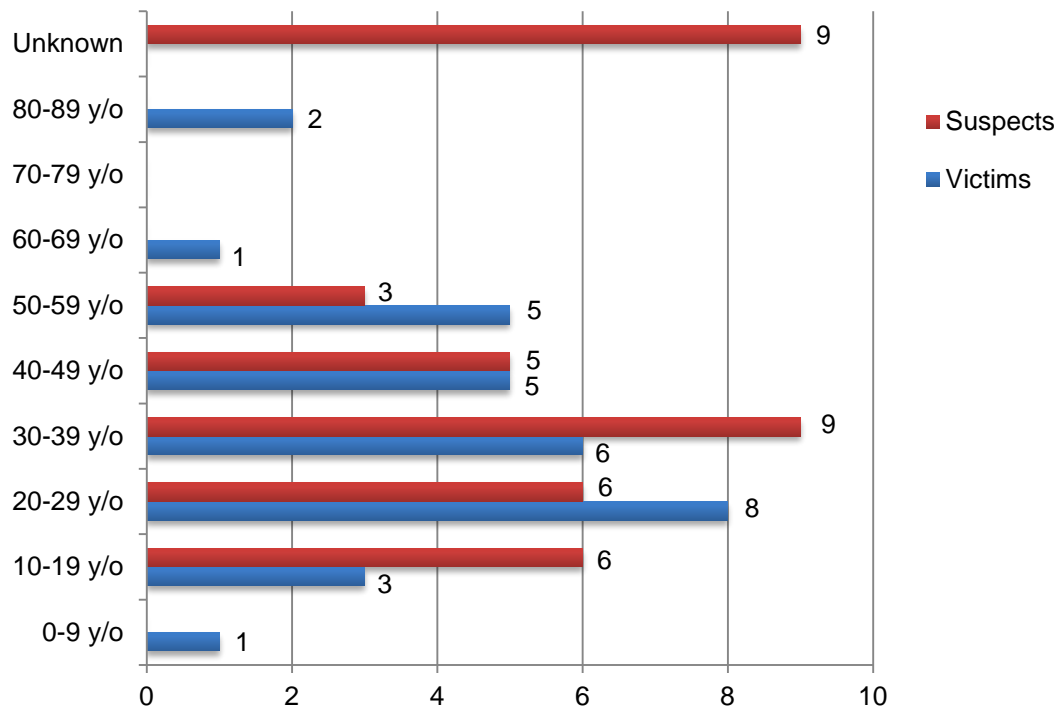
Homicides by Gender

■ Twenty-three males (74%) were victims in 2014.
■ In the cases in which the suspect's gender was known, 32 suspects were males (84%).
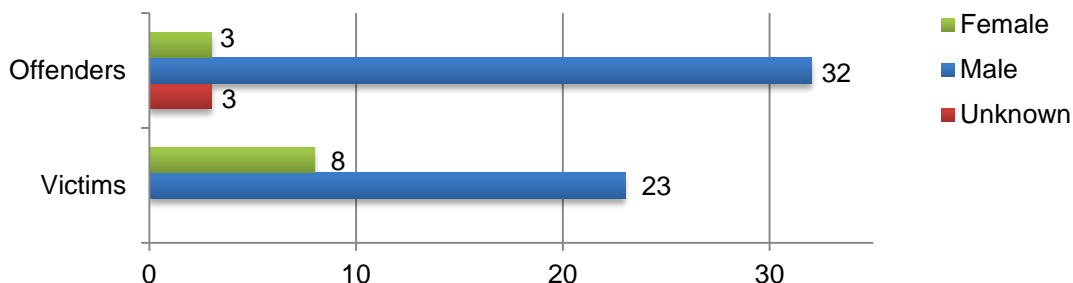

Homicides by Race/Ethnicity

■ Twelve (39%) of the homicide victims in 2014 were White, 11 (35%) were Hispanic, seven (23%) were African American, and one (3%) was Asian.
  • One victim was a Mexican National. One was from Africa and one was from China.
■ In the cases in which the suspect's race/ethnicity was known, 13 (34%) of the homicide suspects were African American, 11 (29%) were Hispanic, 10 (26%) were White, and one (3%) was Asian.
  • One suspect was a Mexican National.
■ Victim and suspect demographics indicate that African Americans are over-represented as victims (23%) and as suspects (34%) of homicides. According to 2010 census data, African Americans account for 7.7% of the overall Austin population.
■ Victim and suspect demographics indicate that for 2014 Hispanics are NOT over-represented as victims (35%) of homicides. They are slightly under-represented as suspects (29%). According to 2010 census data, Hispanics account for 35.1% of the overall Austin population.
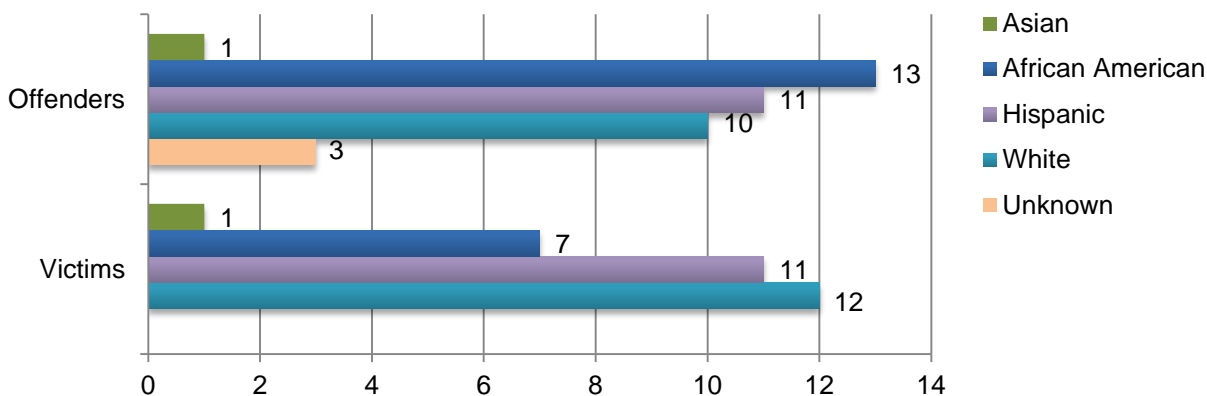
Relationship between Victim and Suspect

■ The relationship between victim and suspect(s) was established in 24 murders, while the relationship was undetermined in seven (23%) murders.
■ At least one suspect was an acquaintance in 16 murders (52%). The suspect was a family member or significant other in five cases (16%).
■ Three murders were considered stranger-on-stranger murders (10%).
   • 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 April 16, 2015, all of the stranger-on-stranger murders have been cleared.
   • None are believed to be related or committed by the same suspect(s).
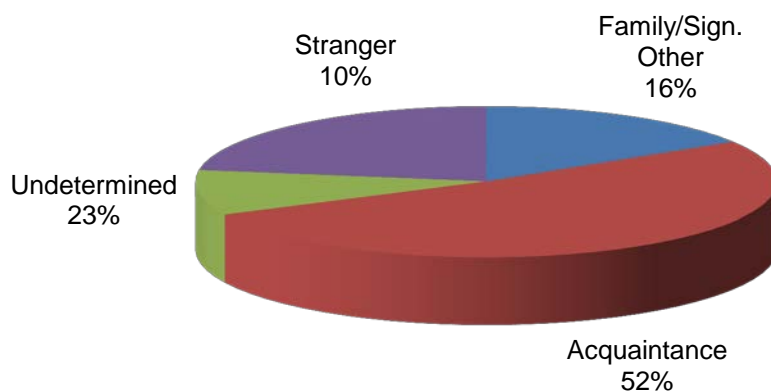
Miscellaneous Victim and Suspect Information

■ Three victims were transients. Three of the known suspects were transients.
■ Three victims were possibly gang members. Five suspects were possible gang members, but no murders were motivated by gang membership or affiliation.
■ Seven of the murder victims were believed to be drug dealers. One suspect was believed to be a drug dealer. Four of these seven murders have been solved. Four are believed to have been robbery/drug-related.
■ One of the homicides was a murder/suicide.
■ One of the homicides was a double homicide – two victims killed during one episode.
■ Three homicides involved multiple victims but only one victim died - two victims in one case and three victims in two cases.
■ Nine homicides involved multiple suspects - two suspects in eight cases and three in one case. Two suspects are believed responsible for two separate episodes involving three homicide victims.
■ One case involved a victim who was assaulted in 1990 and died in 2014.

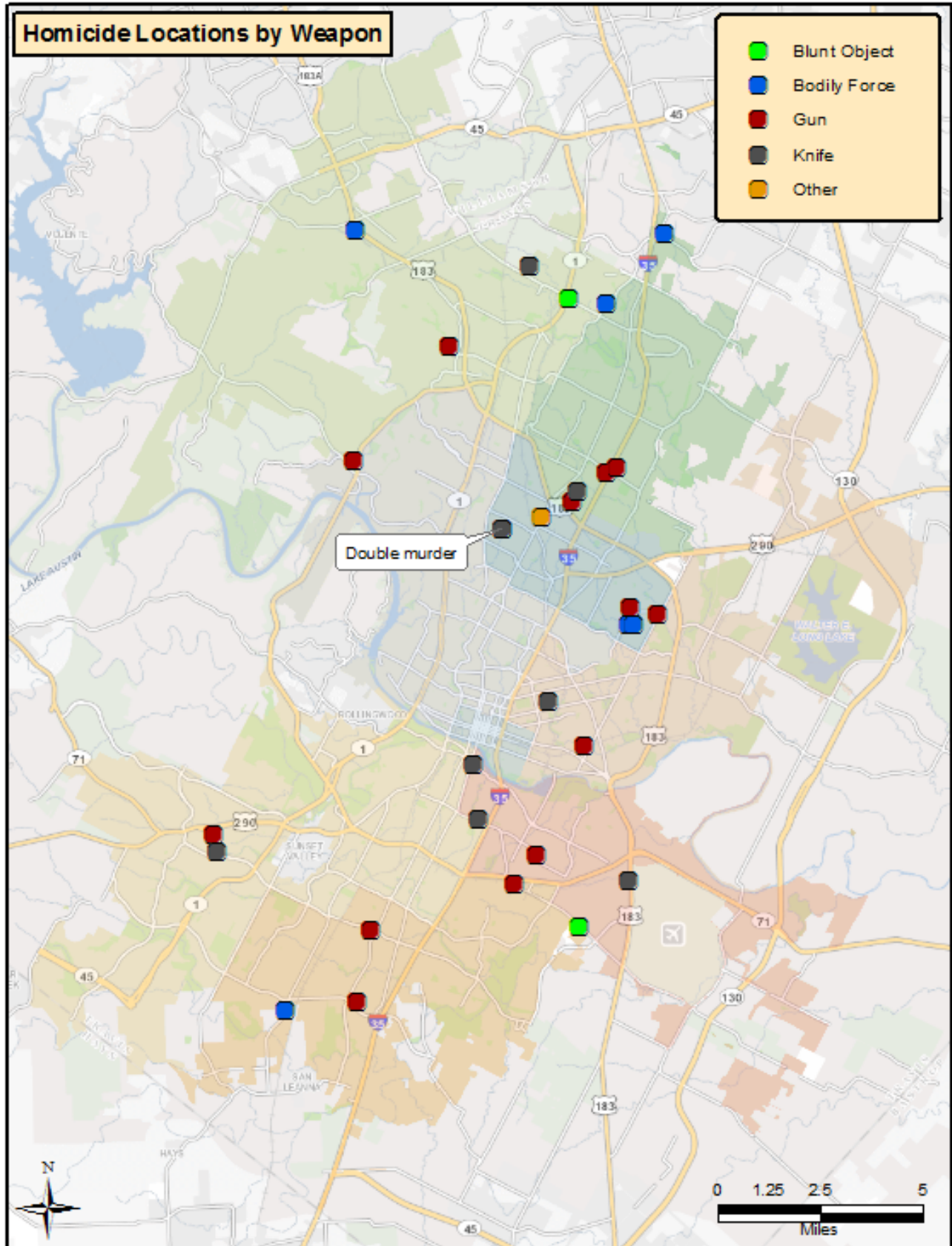## *Family Violence, Contributing Factors, Offense Classification*

■ Five (16%) of the murders met the Texas Penal Code & Family Code definition for family violence.
   • Two were committed by intimate partners or ex-partners.
   • Three were committed by a family member.

- Alcohol was believed to be a contributing factor in six (19%) of the homicides.
- Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 11 (35%) of the homicides.
- Seven (23%) 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.
- Four (13%) of the homicides were documented as Manslaughter. A person commits Manslaughter if he/she recklessly causes the death of an individual.
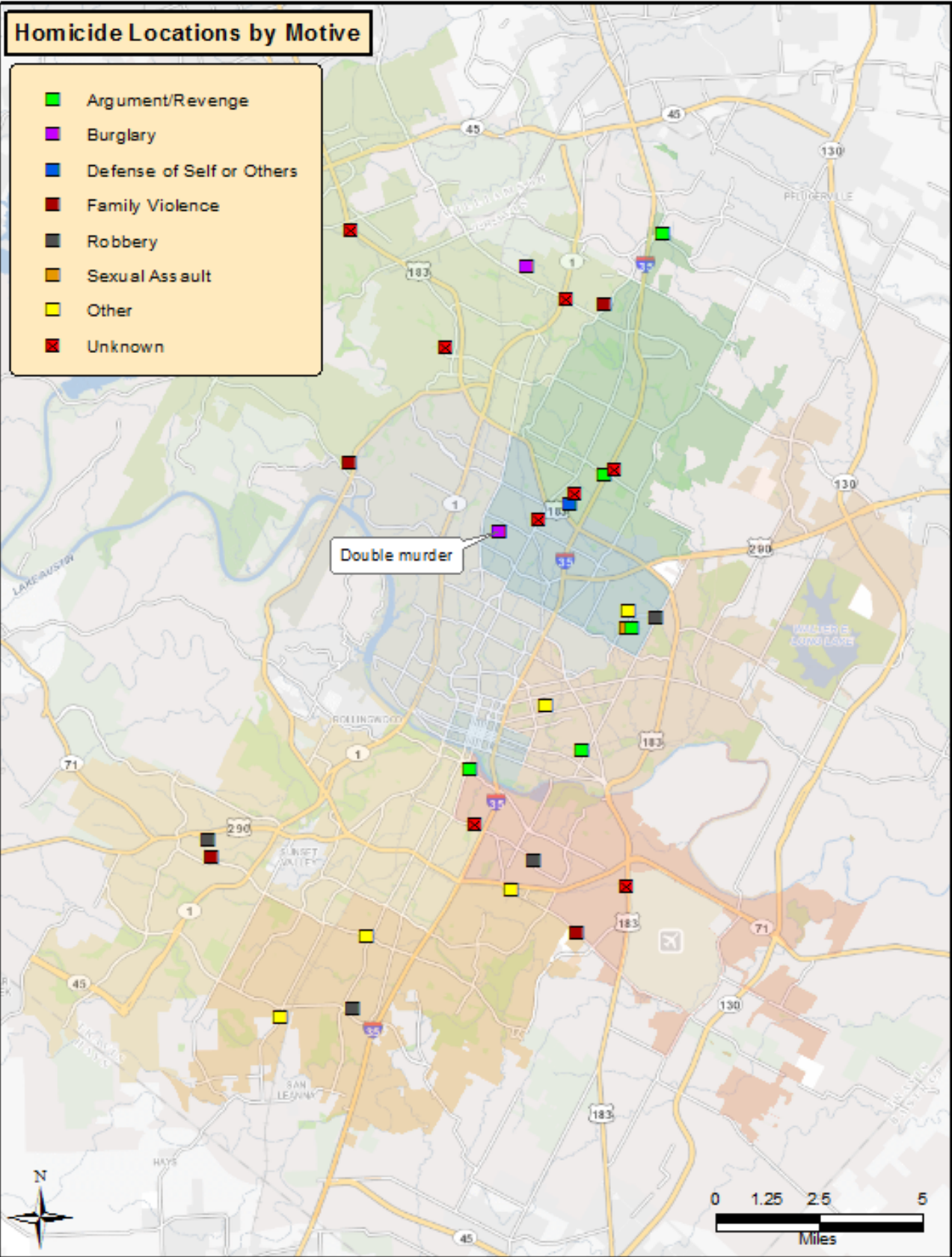
Homicide Clearance Rate

- As of April 16, 2015, 21 of the 31 2014 murders have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for a 68% clearance rate.
  - Eighteen of the 31 cases were cleared during 2014. Two were cleared in January 2015 and one in February 2015.
  - Of the 2014 cases that are considered "not cleared":
    - Six of the murders are not solved. The suspects have not been identified.
    - A warrant for the suspect in one of the 2014 cases has been issued, but the suspect has not been arrested yet.
    - In three murders, the suspect is known but more investigation is required before a warrant can be issued.
  - Four older murder cases were cleared during 2014: one 2001 case, one 2012 case, and two 2013 cases. These were cleared by the arrest of the suspect.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States 2013:*
  - The clearance rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 57.2%. This includes all homicide cases that were cleared during 2013 regardless of when the murder occurred.
  - The rate for the South Region was 67.9%.
    - The rate for the West South Central sub-region was 67%.
  - The rate for all of the United States was 64.1%.
- According to the Texas Department of Public Safety's *2013 Crime in Texas Report*, the clearance rate for all of Texas was 74%.

Other Geographical Views of the Data

Homicide Locations by Weapon

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

Double murder

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.

Homicide Locations by Motive

Legend:
- Argument/Revenge (green)
- Burglary (purple)
- Defense of Self or Others (blue)
- Family Violence (dark red)
- Robbery (dark gray)
- Sexual Assault (orange)
- Other (yellow)
- Unknown (red X)

Double murder

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Homicide Locations by Victim Age

Legend:
- 0 - 9
- 17 - 19
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 - 69
- 80 - 89

Double murder
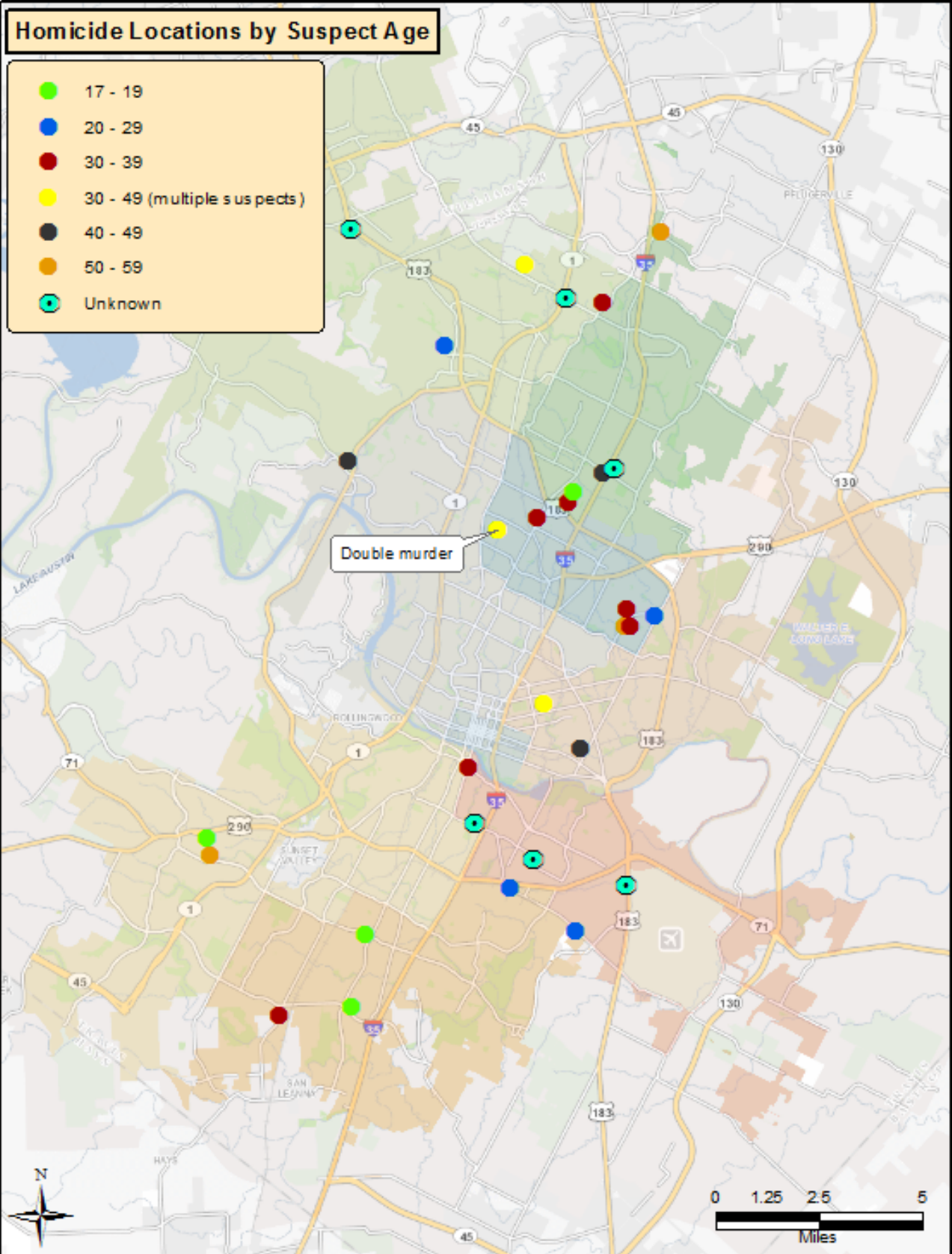
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Homicide Locations by Suspect Age

- 🟢 17 - 19
- 🔵 20 - 29
- 🔴 30 - 39
- 🟡 30 - 49 (multiple suspects)
- ⚫ 40 - 49
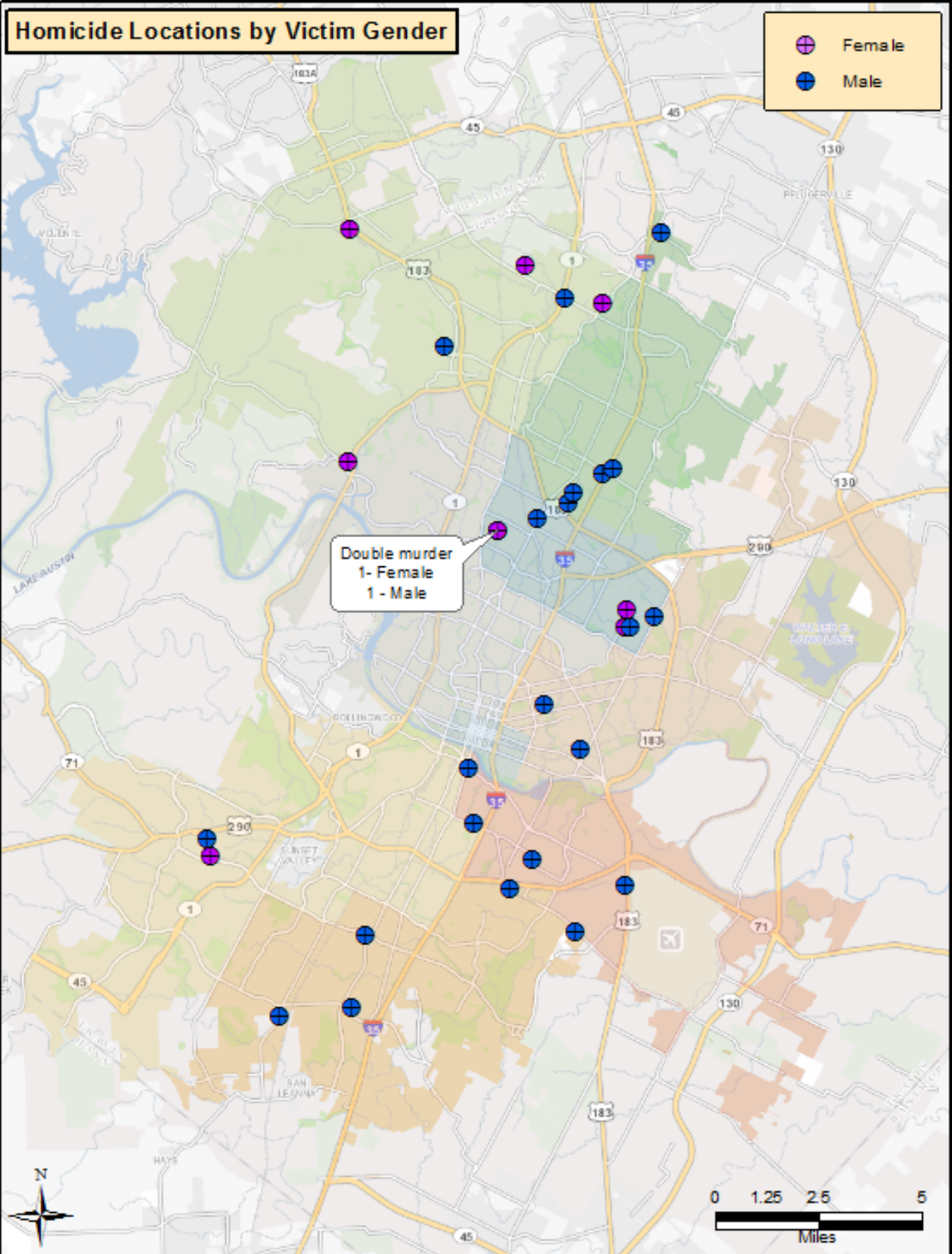- 🟠 50 - 59
- ◉ Unknown

Double murder

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Homicide Locations by Victim Gender

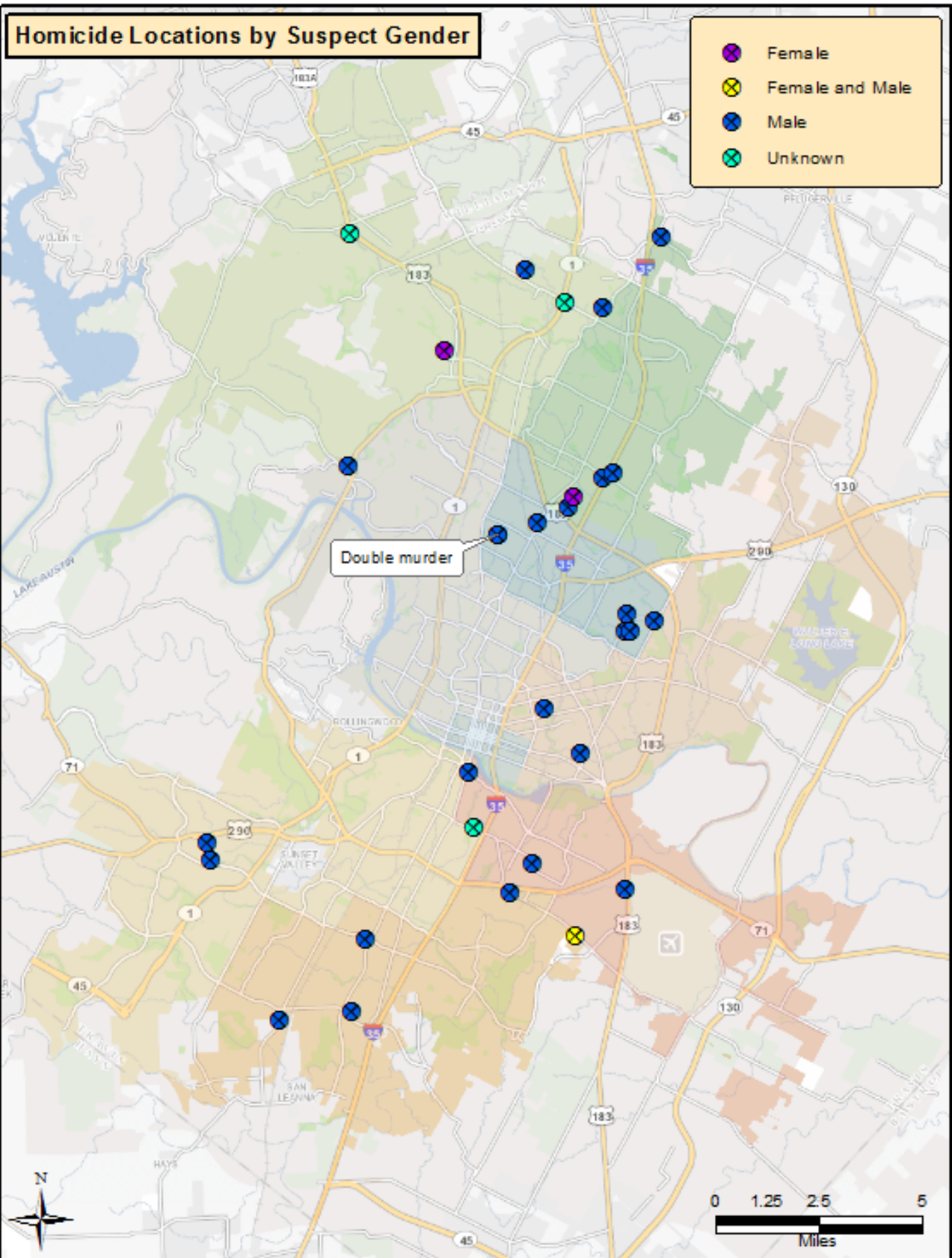Double murder
1- Female
1 - Male

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Homicide Locations by Suspect Gender

Legend:
- Female
- Female and Male
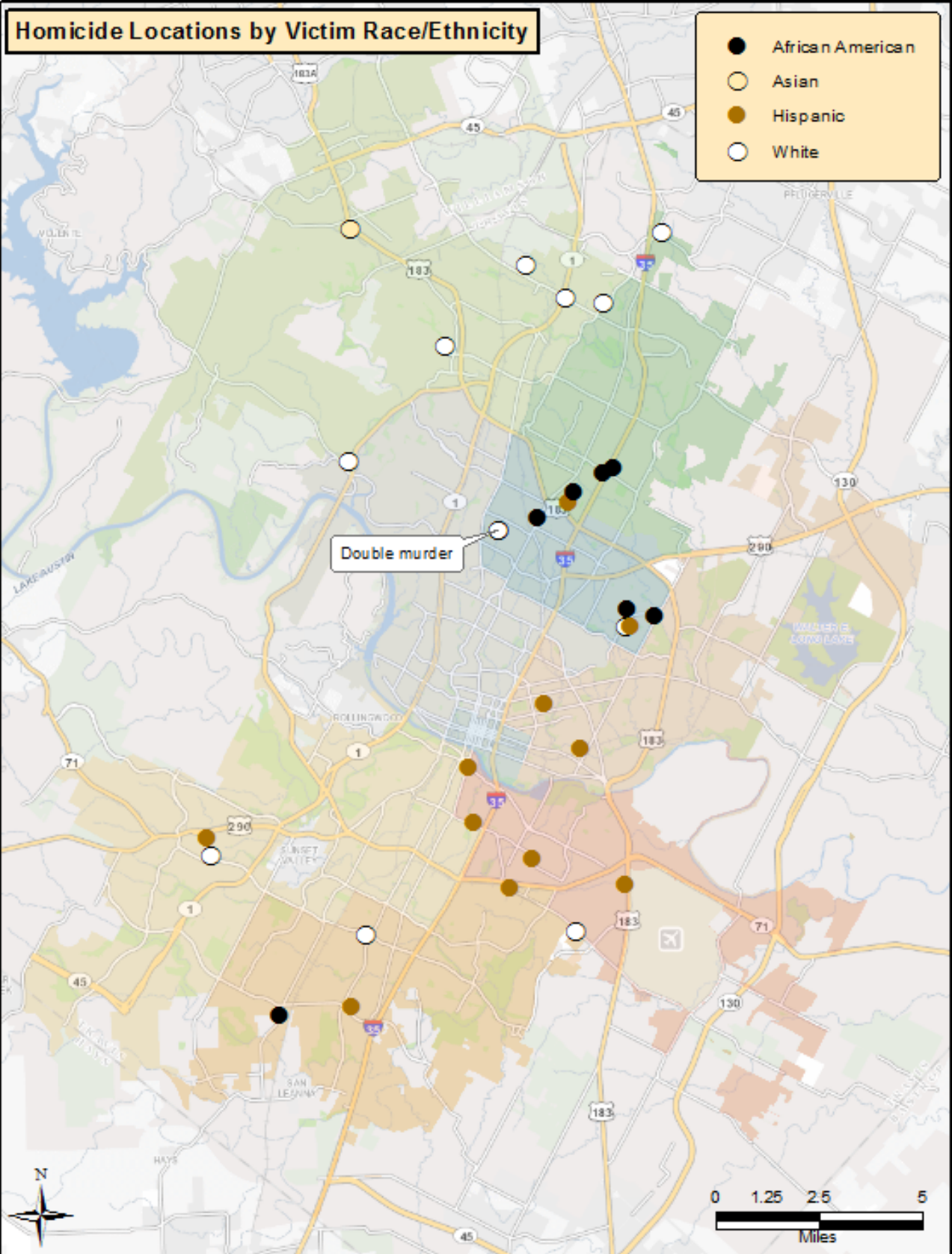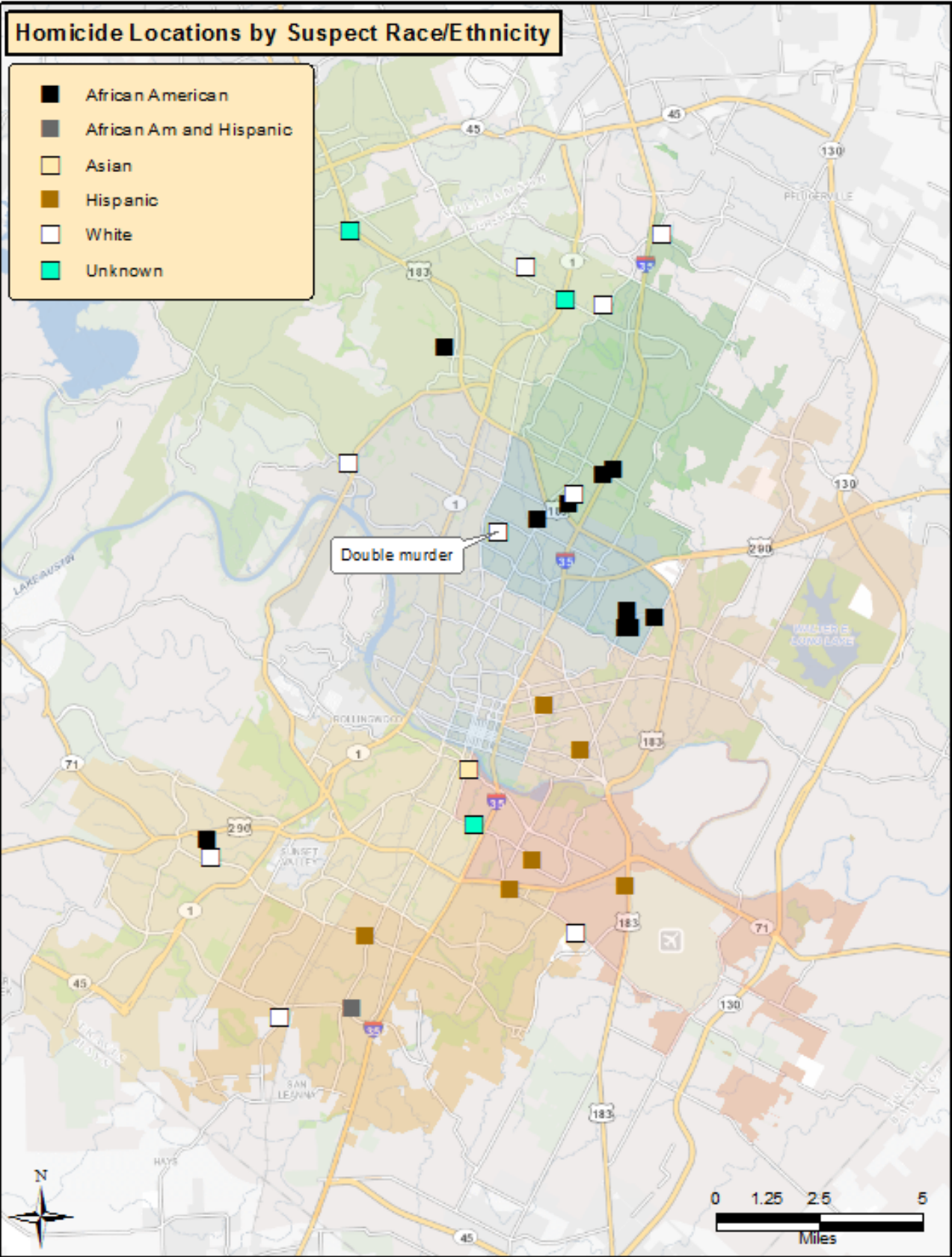- Male
- Unknown

Double murder

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Homicide Locations by Victim Race/Ethnicity

Legend:
- ● African American
- ○ Asian
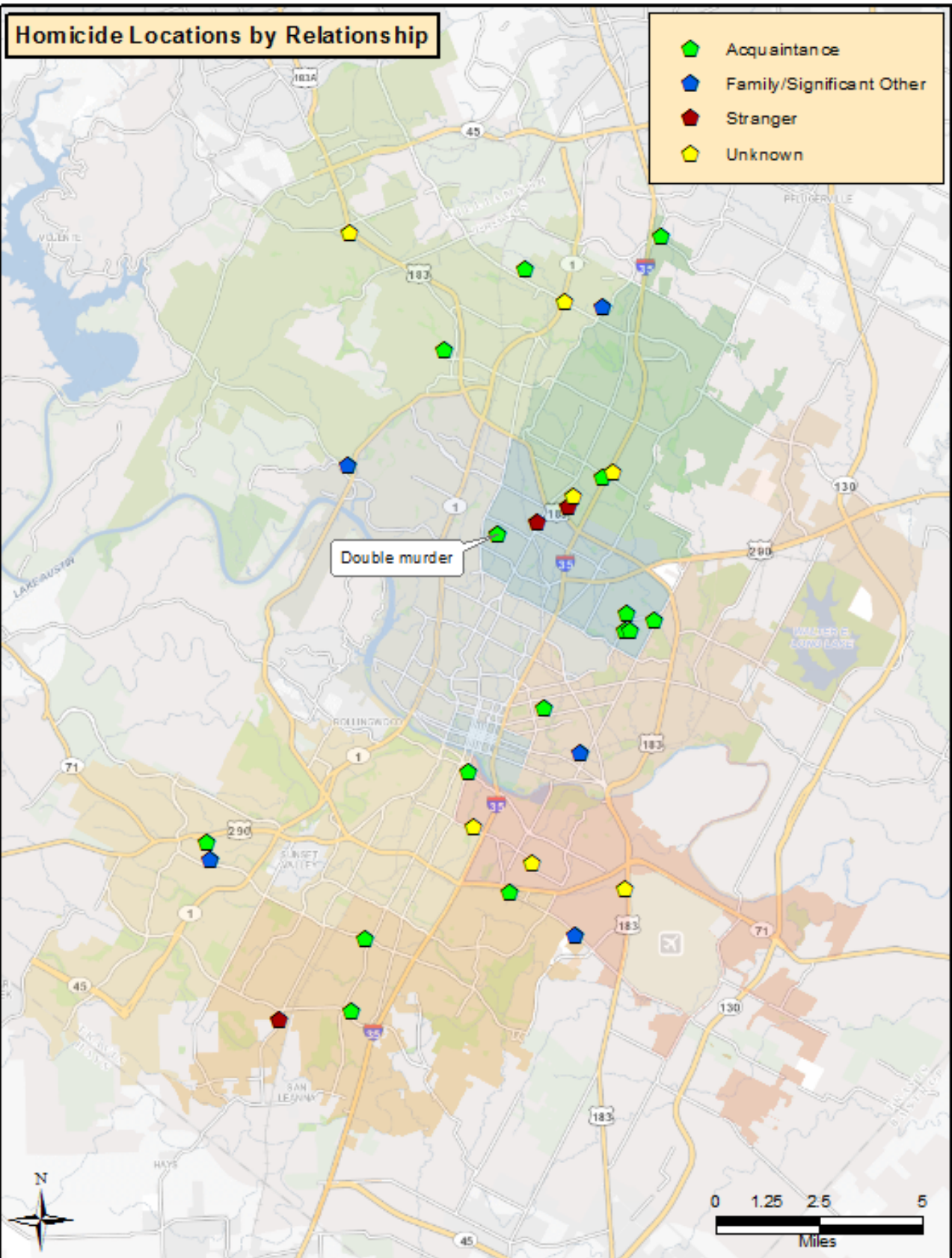- ● Hispanic
- ○ White

Double murder

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Homicide Locations by Suspect Race/Ethnicity

Legend:
- African American
- African Am and Hispanic
- Asian
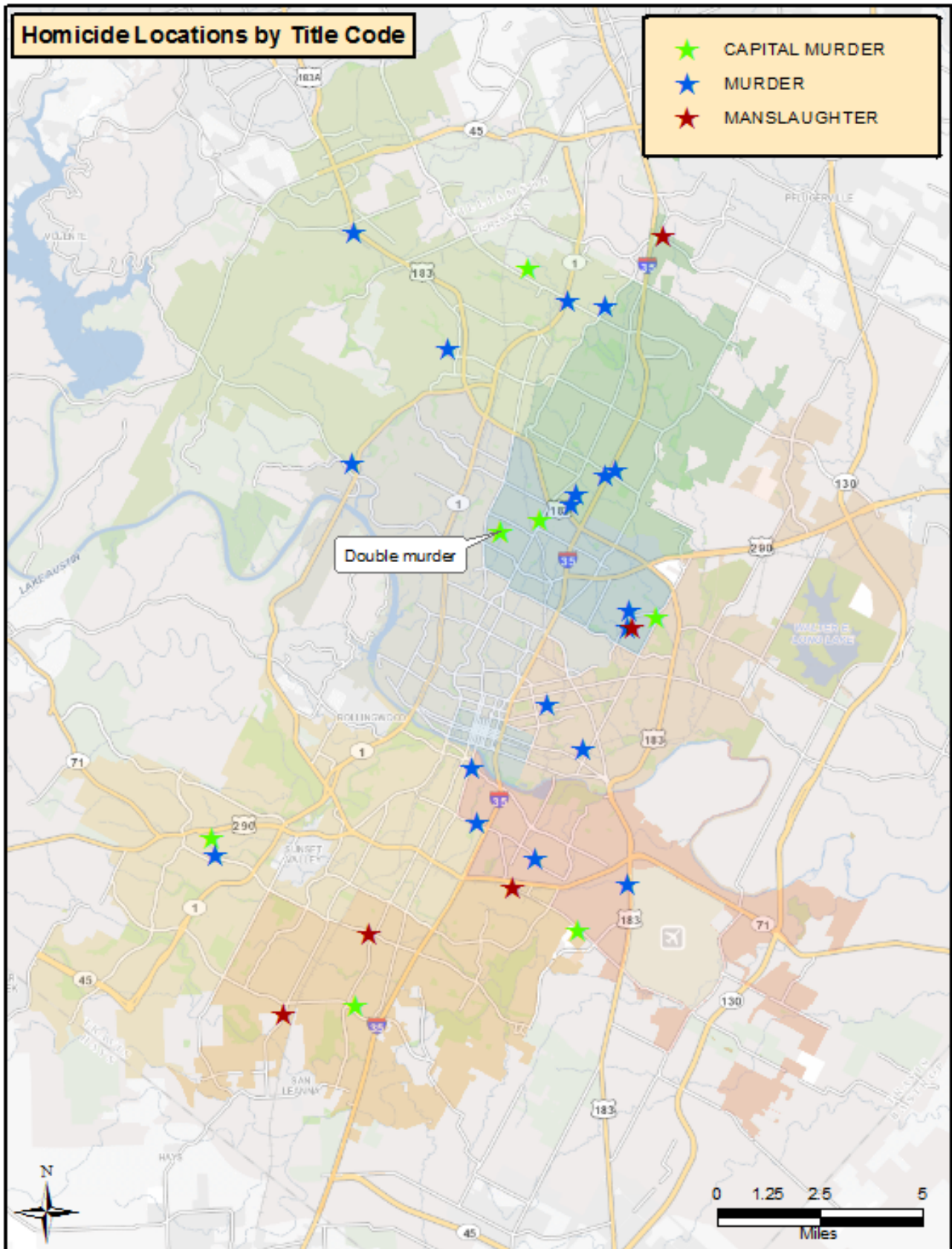- Hispanic
- White
- Unknown

Double murder

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Homicide Locations by Relationship

Legend:
- Acquaintance (green)
- Family/Significant Other (blue)
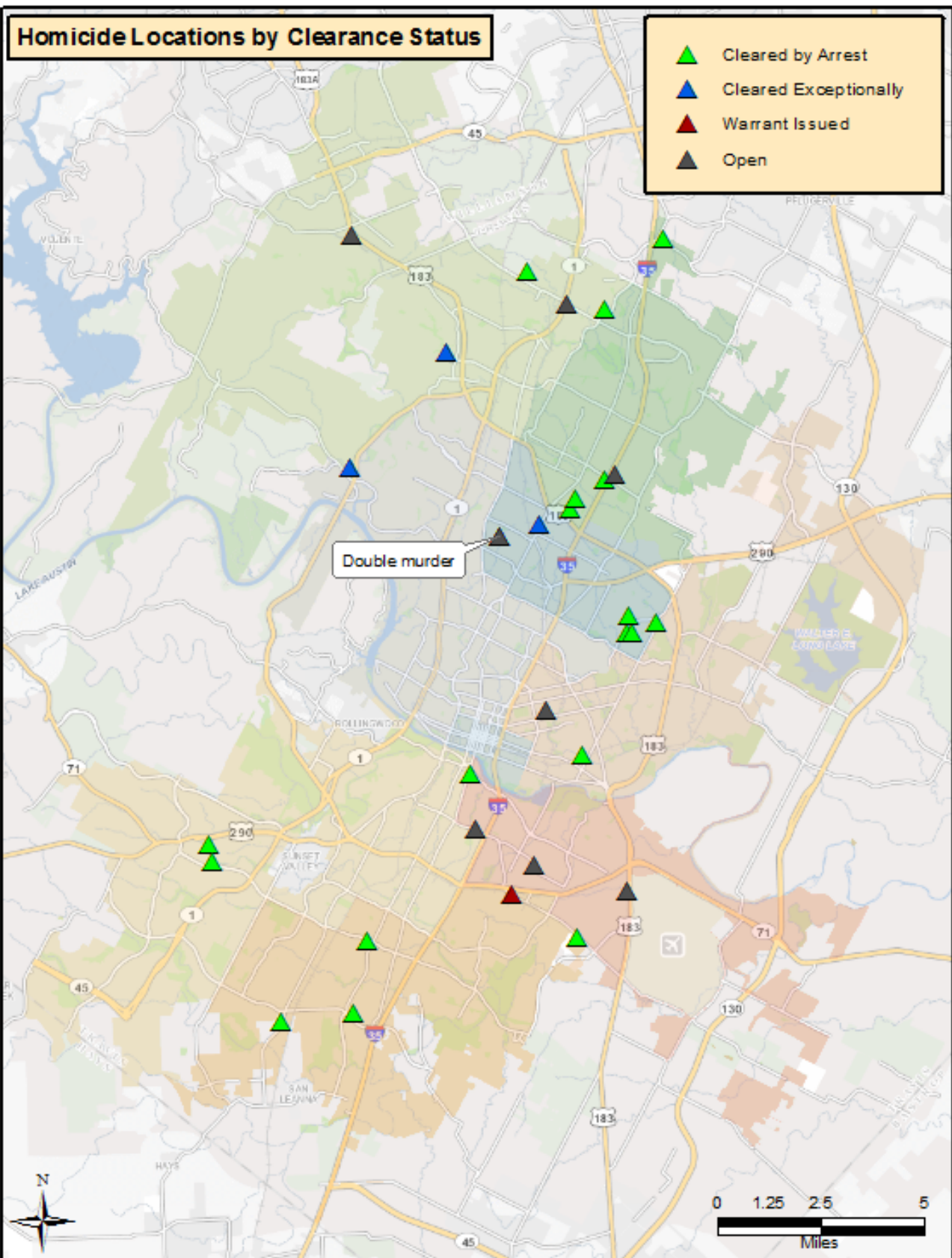- Stranger (dark red)
- Unknown (yellow)

Double murder

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Homicide Locations by Title Code

Legend:
- ★ CAPITAL MURDER
- ★ MURDER
- ★ MANSLAUGHTER

Double murder

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Homicide Locations by Clearance Status

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

Double murder

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