
An Analysis of Austin, Texas Homicide: Offenses, Victims, and Suspects in 2020

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Introduction

The following data reflects all non-negligent murder cases reported to the Austin Police Department for 2020. Negligent homicides and officer-involved shootings determined to be justified by Austin PD 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 2019*, Texas Department of Public Safety's *2019 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 2020 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 late in the year, comparison to 2019 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 2020 homicide data as of September 15, 2021.

- There were 44 homicides in Austin in 2020 for a rate of 4.4 murders per 100,000 population.
- Eight (18%) homicides occurred in Edward sector, seven (16%) occurred in Charlie sector, seven (16%) occurred in Frank sector, and seven (16%) occurred in Ida sector. These four sectors account for a total of 66% of 2020's homicides.
- Sixteen (36%) of the homicides occurred at a single-family residence, apartment, or extended stay motel. Of those, 11 occurred inside the residence, apartment, or motel room.
- Four occurred at transient camps (9%) and two occurred at a homeless shelter (5%).
- There were three locations with more than one homicide in 2020. There was a double murder at 5401 E Parmer Ln, two separate murders at the transient camp in the 2400 Block of E Riverside Dr., and two separate murders at 500 E 7th St (ARCH).
- A gun was used in 32 of the 44 murders, accounting for 73% of the weapon types used in the 2020 murders.
- Twenty-five (57%) of the 2020 murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Six (14%) of the cases met the legal requirements for family violence.
- A total of 44 victims and 55 suspects were documented for the 2020 murders.
- Twenty-nine (66%) of the victims were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Thirty-eight (86%) of the known suspects were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Fifteen (34%) of the homicide victims in 2020 were Black, fifteen (34%) were White, and fourteen (32%) were Hispanic.
- The race/ethnicity was known for 54 of the 55 suspects - 24 (44%) of the homicide suspects were Black, 20 (36%) were Hispanic, and 10 (18%) were White.
- In the 41 cases in which the suspect's relationship to the victim was established, at least one suspect was an acquaintance in 20 murders (45%). The suspect was a family member or significant other in six cases (14%).
- Fifteen of these 41 murders (34%) were considered stranger-on-stranger murders. As of September 15, 2021, 14 of the 15 stranger-on-stranger murders have been solved.
- Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in 13 (30%) of the 2020 homicides. Five (38%) of these 13 robbery related homicides were also drug related.
- Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 20 (45%) of the homicides. Drugs were also believed to be a contributing factor in 45% of the 2019 homicides.
- In addition to the 44 non-negligent homicides, there were five justifiable homicides in 2020. (Note: Two of the five cases that were deemed justifiable homicides in 2020 by APD investigations were presented to a grand jury in 2021 after UCR statistics were submitted and resulted in arrests. These two cases have not been included in this analysis). There were 33 non-negligent homicides in 2019 and four justifiable homicides.
- As of September 15, 2021, 37 of the 44 murders in 2020 have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for an 84% clearance rate.

Statistical Representation

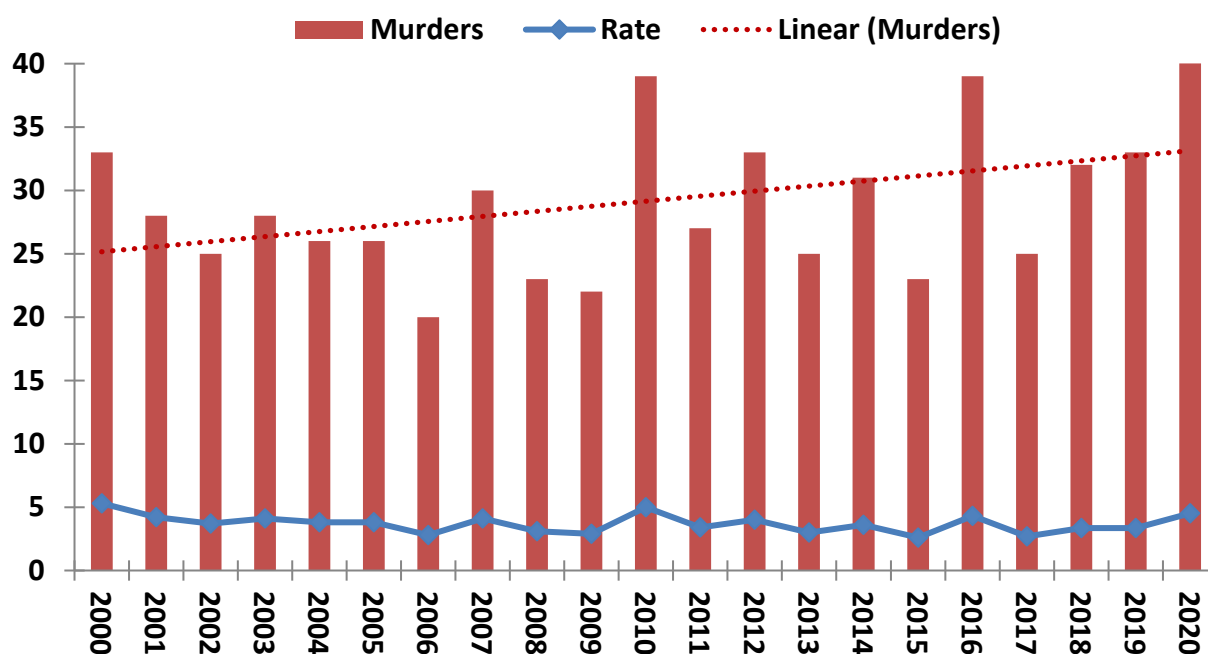
Homicide Data

- The analysis contained in this report is based on 2020 homicide data as of September 15, 2021. Only intentional homicides (non-negligent homicides) were included in the analysis.

Homicide Totals by Year

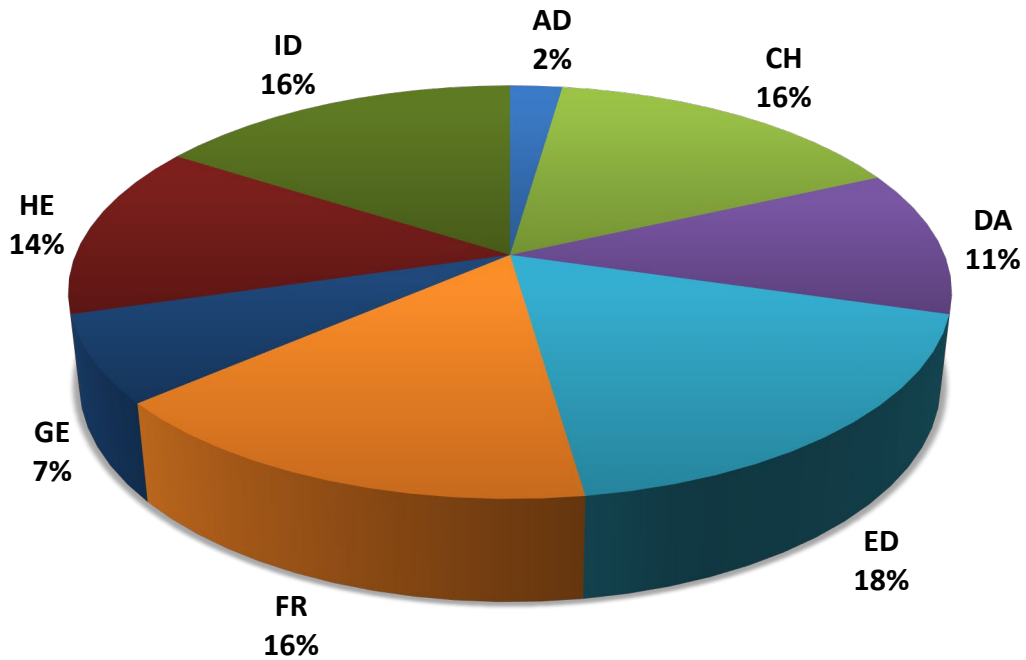
- There were 44 homicides documented in Austin, Texas in 2020. Using a population estimate of 992,208, this calculates to a rate of 4.4 murders per 100,000 population.
- In 2019, there were 33 homicides in Austin, 3.4 murders per 100,000 population.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice's *2019 Crime in the United States* report:
 - The homicide rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 12.5 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 *2019 Crime in Texas Report*, the homicide rate for all of Texas was 4.8 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 an increasing trend during this timeframe.

Austin, TX Homicides and Rates by Year

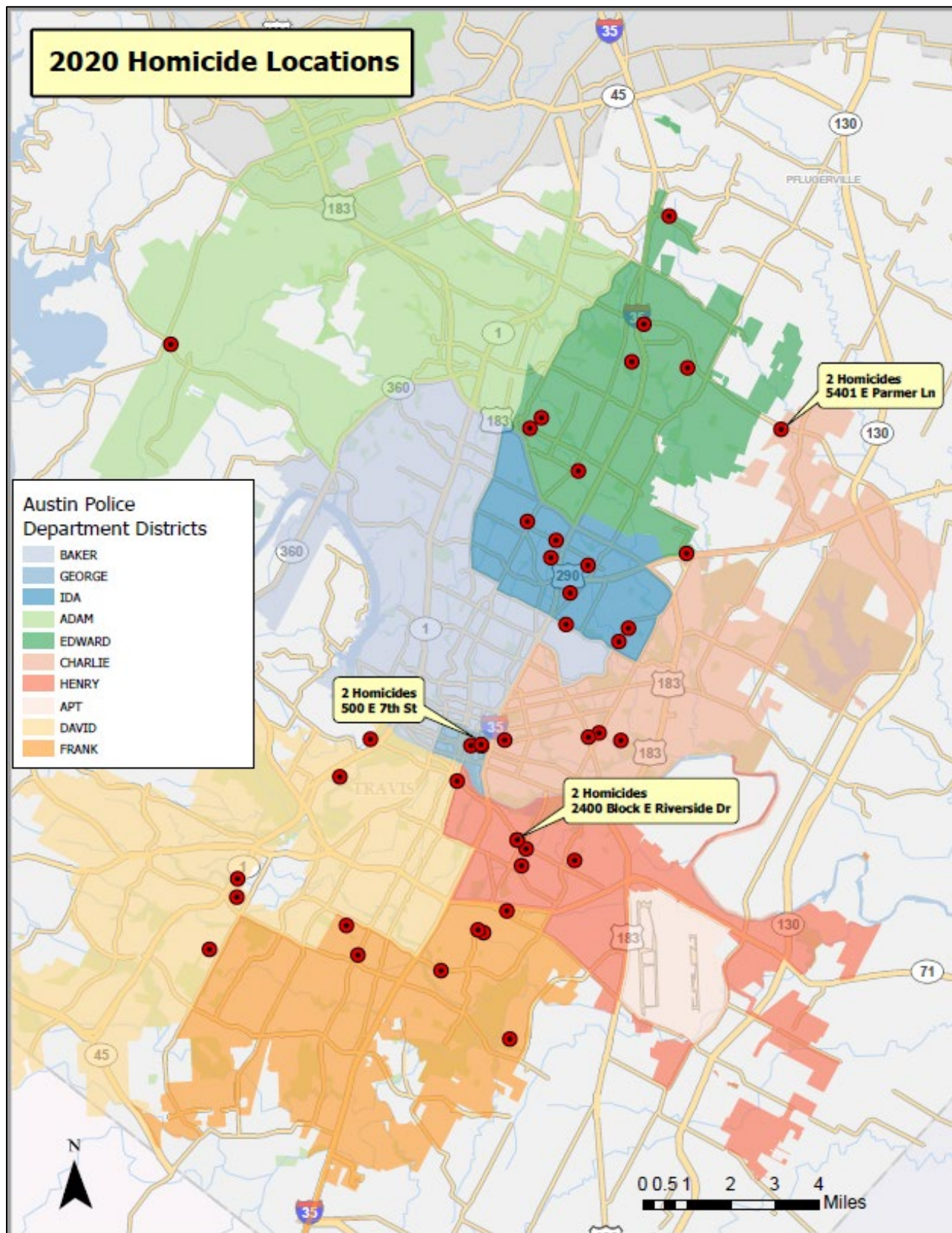


Homicides by Area Command

- Eight (18%) homicides occurred in Edward sector, seven (16%) occurred in Charlie sector, seven (16%) occurred in Frank sector, and seven (16%) occurred in Ida sector. These four sectors account for a total of 66% of 2020's homicides.
- The rest of the sectors had one to six homicides except Baker sector, which had no homicides during 2020.



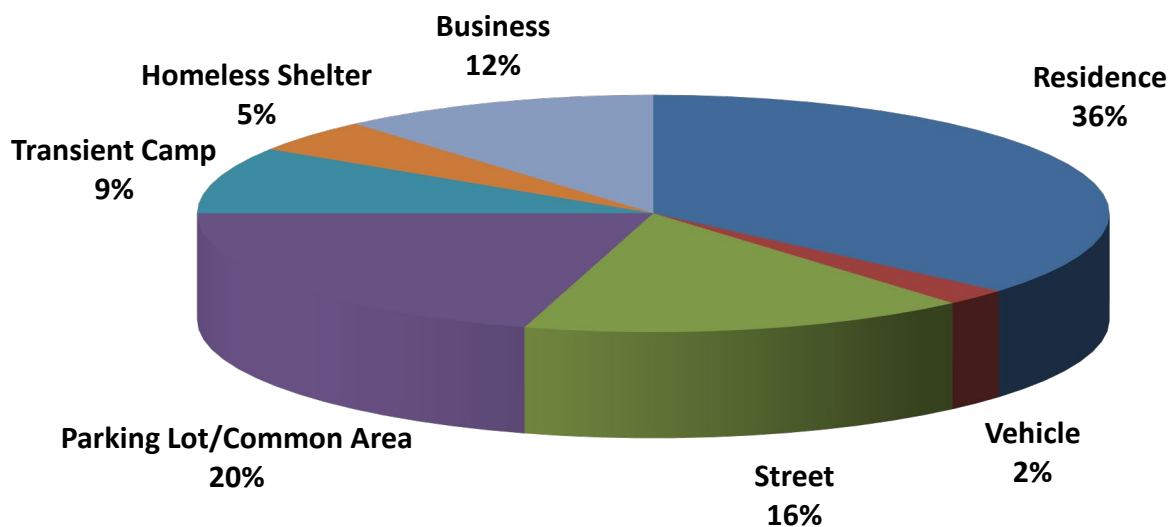
Homicides by Location – Point Map



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.

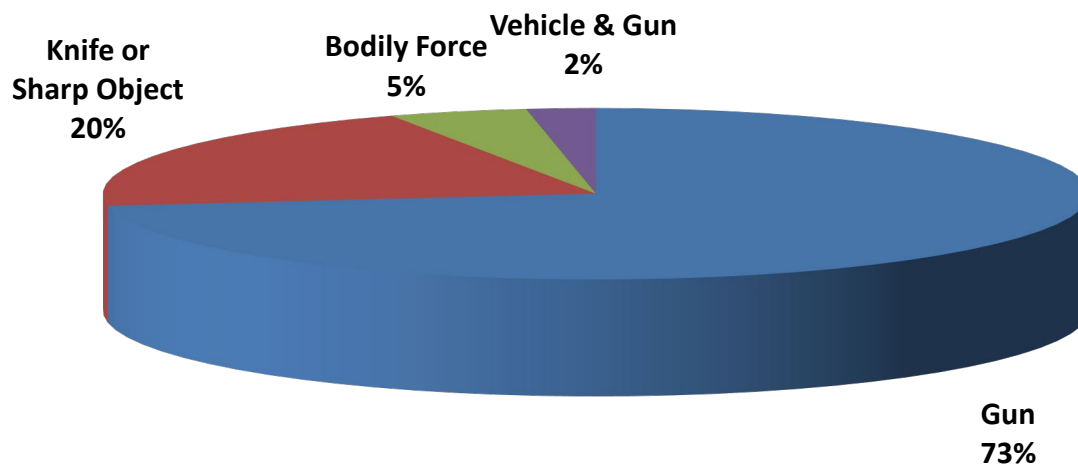
Homicides by Type of Premise

- Sixteen (36%) of the homicides occurred at a single-family residence, apartment, or extended stay motel. Of those, 11 occurred inside the residence, apartment, or motel room.
- Nine homicides (20%) occurred in a parking lot or common area (eight of those in apartment complex parking lots or common areas) and five (12%) occurred in or outside a business.
- Seven (16%) homicides occurred on a street and two of these seven homicides were road rages committed by the same suspect.
- Four occurred at transient camps (9%) and two occurred at a homeless shelter (5%).
- There were three locations with more than one homicide in 2020. There was a double murder at 5401 E Parmer Ln, two separate murders at a transient camp in the 2400 Block of E Riverside Dr, and two separate murders at 500 E 7th St (ARCH).



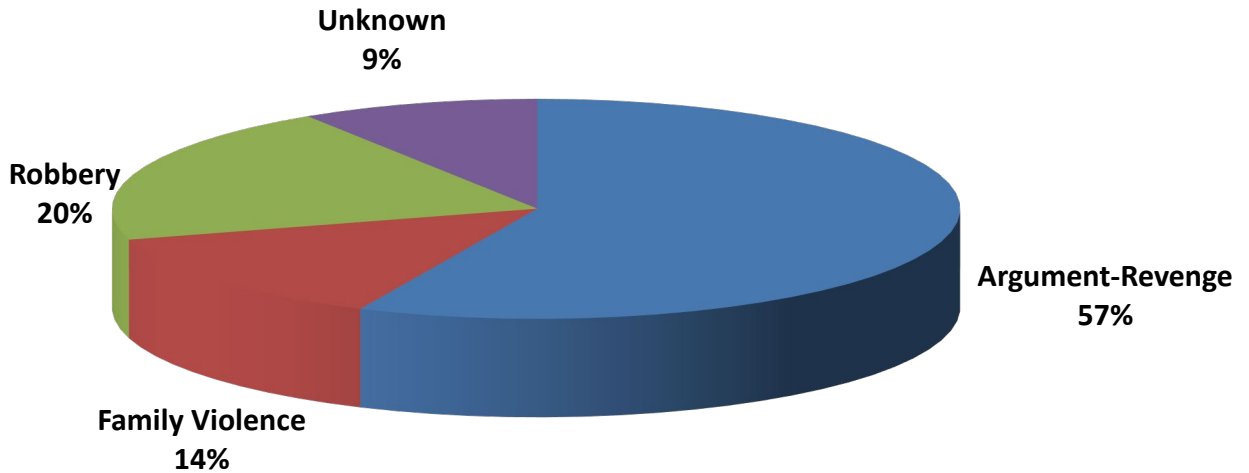
Types of Weapons Used

- A gun was used in 32 of the 44 murders, accounting for 73% of the weapon types used in the 2020 murders.
- A gun accounted for 61% of the weapon types used in 2019 murders.
- A knife or a sharp object was used in nine cases (20%), bodily force was used in two cases (5%), and a vehicle and a gun was used in one case (2%).



Homicide Motives

- Twenty-five (57%) of the 2020 murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Six (14%) of the cases met the legal requirements for family violence.
- In 2019, 33% of the cases met the legal requirements for family violence.
- Robbery was the motive in nine homicides (20%). Five of these were drug related robberies.
- Robbery was the motive in 27% of the 2019 murders and they were all drug related.

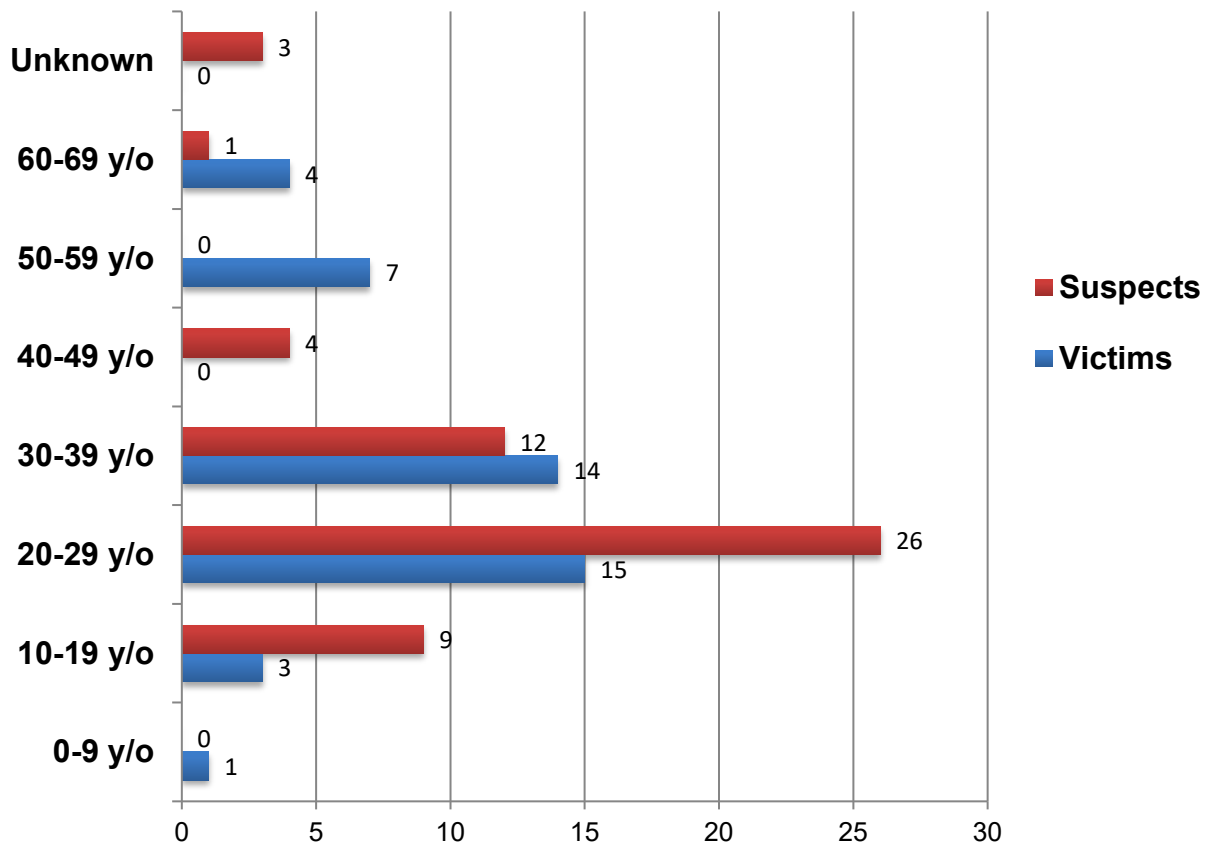


Victims & Suspects

- A total of 44 victims and 55 suspects were documented for the 2020 murders.

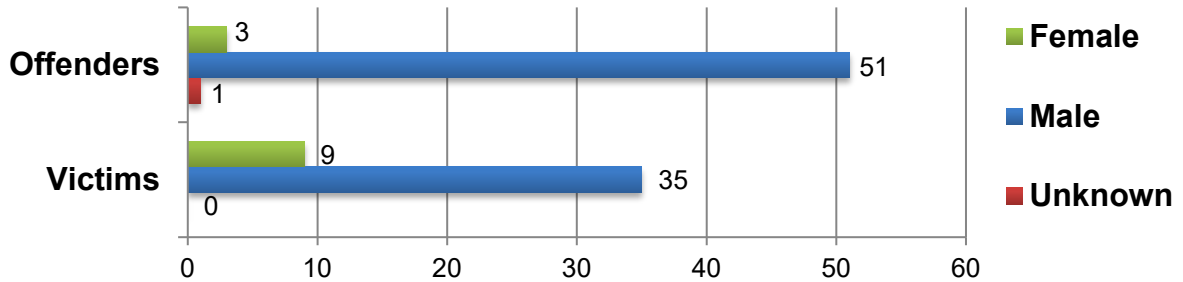
Homicides by Age

- The youngest victim was two years old and the oldest was 68 years old, with 29 of the victims (66%) 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 61 years old, with 38 of the suspects (86%) falling between the ages of 20 and 39.



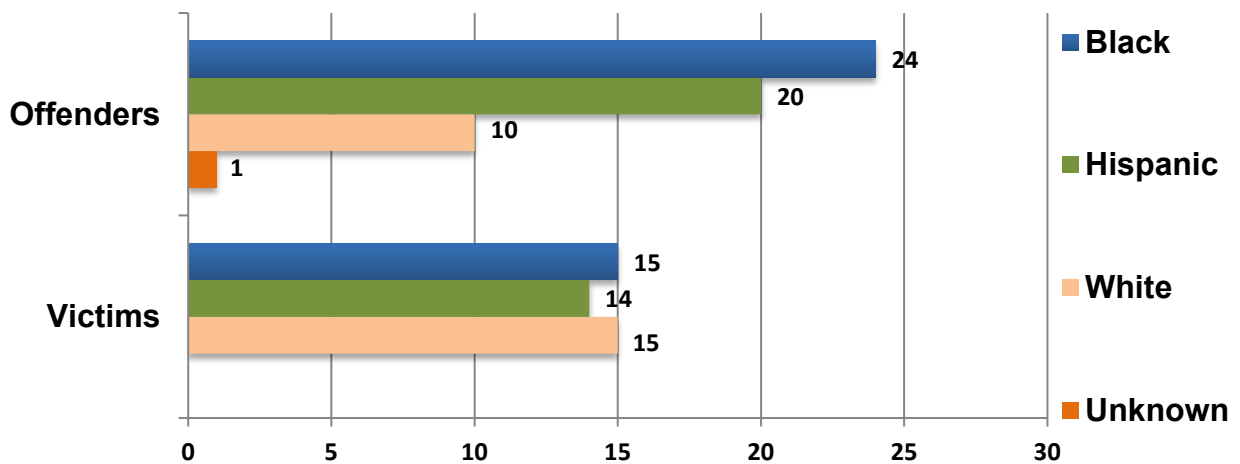
Homicides by Gender

- Thirty-five males (80%) were victims in 2020.
- The suspect's gender was known for 54 of the 55 total suspects. Fifty-one of the known suspects were males (93%).



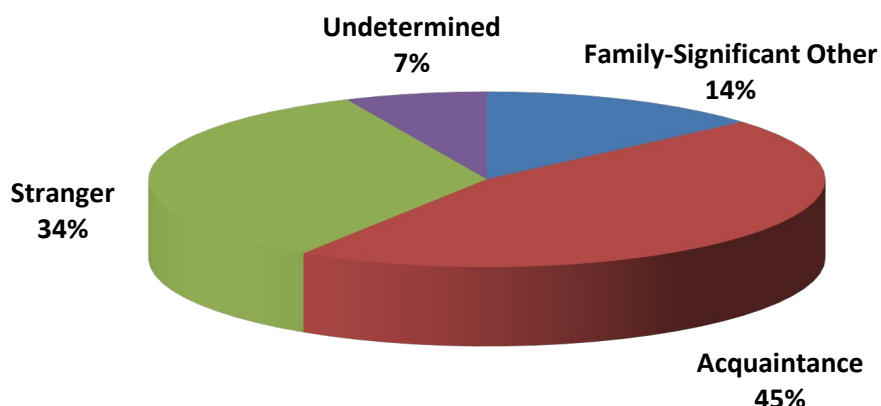
Homicides by Race/Ethnicity

- Fifteen (34%) of the homicide victims in 2020 were Black, fifteen (34%) were White, and fourteen (32%) were Hispanic.
 - Two of the victims were Mexican Nationals, one was from Guatemala, and one was from Honduras.
- The race/ethnicity was known for 54 of the 55 suspects - 24 (44%) of the homicide suspects were Black, 20 (36%) were Hispanic, and 10 (18%) were White.
 - Four of the suspects were Mexican Nationals, one was from Guatemala, and one was from Honduras.



Relationship between Victim and Suspect

- The relationship between victim and suspect(s) was established in 41 of the 44 murders in 2020, while the relationship was undetermined in three (7%) murders.
- At least one suspect was an acquaintance in 20 murders (45%).
- The suspect was a family member or significant other in six cases (14%).
- Fifteen of these 41 murders (34%) were considered stranger-on-stranger murders.
 - Five of these cases were motivated by robbery.
 - Two of these cases were road rage shootings committed by the same person.
 - In six cases, the victim and suspect were brought together by a location (such as a transient camp, homeless shelter, bar or parking lot) or an activity (such as buying/selling drugs, buying/selling guns, gang retaliation, prostitution or a large party).
 - One case involved an altercation when something was thrown at the victim's car.
 - One case involved an emotionally disturbed homeless person who stabbed the random victim and then committed suicide.
 - As of September 15, 2021, 14 of the 15 stranger-on-stranger murders have been solved – thirteen were cleared by arrest and a warrant was issued in another but the suspect is believed to have fled to Mexico. A murder that occurred outside a bar is still unsolved.



Miscellaneous Victim and Suspect Information

- At least nine victims were transients (21%). At least ten of the known suspects were transients (23%). At least 13 (30%) of the 44 murders involved a transient victim and/or transient suspect. Six murders (14%) occurred at a transient camp or homeless shelter.
- At least 11 of the known suspects were possibly gang members and at least two of the victims were possibly gang members.
- One of the homicides was a murder/suicide.
- Eight of the homicides involved multiple suspects.
- One case was a double murder which resulted from a drug related home invasion robbery.
- One suspect committed two separate road rage murders.

Family Violence, Contributing Factors, Offense Classification

- Six (14%) of the murders met the Texas Penal Code & Family Code definition for family violence.
 - Four of these six murders were committed by an intimate partner or ex-partner. One was a murder-suicide.
 - Two of these six murders were committed by a family member.
- Alcohol was believed to be a contributing factor in eleven (25%) of the homicides.
- Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in 13 (30%) of the 2020 homicides. Five (38%) of these 13 robbery-related homicides were also drug related. Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in 33% of 2019 homicides.
- Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 20 (45%) of the homicides. Drugs were also believed to be a contributing factor in 45% of the 2019 homicides.
- Prostitution was believed to be a contributing factor in one (2%) of the homicides.
- Offense classifications are determined using the facts of the murder investigation in conjunction with mitigating and/or aggravating factors or circumstances.
 - Five (11%) of the homicides were designated as Capital Murder as of September 15, 2021. A homicide can be designated as Capital Murder if it includes the commission of an additional felony at the time of the murder (all five of these cases involved robbery), 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.
 - Two (5%) of the homicides were designated as Manslaughter as of September 15, 2021. A person commits Manslaughter if he/she recklessly causes the death of an individual. One of these two cases involved a gun that was handled recklessly and the other case had drugs as a contributing factor.
 - In addition to the 44 non-negligent homicides, there were five justifiable homicides in 2020. Two of these five cases that were deemed justifiable homicides in 2020 by APD investigations were presented to a grand jury in 2021 after UCR statistics were submitted and resulted in arrests. One case was an officer-involved shooting and the other involved an altercation in which both parties were armed with guns. There were 33 non-negligent homicides in 2019 and four justifiable homicides.

Homicide Clearance Rate

- As of September 15, 2021, 37 of the 44 murders in 2020 have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for an 84% clearance rate.
 - Thirty-four of the 44 cases were cleared during 2020. Two cases were cleared in February and one case in July of 2021.
 - Of the seven murders in 2020 that are considered “not cleared”:
 - Two cases have warrants issued and in both cases the suspects are believed to have fled to Mexico.
 - Two cases have probable suspects identified but further investigation is needed.
 - Three cases have not been solved to date – two occurred at the same transient camp and were drug related. The other case was a shooting that occurred outside a bar.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice’s *2019 Crime in the United States* report:
 - The homicide clearance rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 54.7%. **This includes all homicide cases that were cleared during 2019 regardless of when the murder occurred.**
 - The homicide clearance rate for all of the United States was 61.4%.
- According to the Texas Department of Public Safety’s *2019 Crime in Texas Report*, the clearance rate for murder for all of Texas was 58.7%.
- As of September 15, 2021 (in addition to the thirty-four 2020 murders that were cleared during 2020), three cases from previous years were also cleared - for a total of 37 murder cases cleared during 2020. Based on 44 murders occurring in 2020 and 37 murder cases being cleared during 2020 – 84% is also the total UCR clearance rate for homicide cases for Austin in 2020.
 - Three 2019 murder cases were cleared by arrest in January, February, and April of 2020.