HOMICIDES IN OHIO
IN 2008
Since 1930, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has annually collected data on crime in the United States through its Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. The UCR Program collects only those data that come to the attention of law enforcement through victim reports or observation. Reporting is voluntary and, in 2008, law enforcement agencies active in the UCR Program represented 94.9 percent of the total population.

Data are collected on the eight Index offenses of murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. In addition to collecting summary data on the eight Index crimes, the FBI collects detailed data on homicides. Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) provide incident-based information on criminal homicides, including information describing the victim(s), the offender(s), the relationship between victim and offender, when the incident occurred, the weapon used, and the circumstances leading to the homicide incident. Law enforcement agencies in Ohio voluntarily report SHR data directly to the Federal Bureau of Investigation as part of the UCR Program.

The following report is based on Ohio homicides reported by law enforcement to the FBI for 2008. Unless otherwise stated, data come from SHR.
Homicides in Ohio and the U.S.

Homicides in Ohio occur at a rate of approximately five per 100,000 population. Over the past 30 years both the number and rate of homicides has fluctuated. Highs occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s and again in the early-1990s. While homicides in recent years are lower than in past decades, there has been an upswing since 2000.


A comparison of Ohio’s homicide rate to that of the U.S. suggests that Ohio is not unique with regard to this crime. Ohio’s homicide rate patterns vary similarly to that of the U.S., although at a lower rate. The rates do show a convergence, however.

Homicides in Ohio in 2008

In 2008, Ohio law enforcement reported 543 homicides to the FBI in its annual Crime in the United States publication. Of these, 487 homicides were also reported in the FBI’s Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR). Given the more complete information provided in the SHR, the data in this report focus on these 487 homicides.

Number of homicides. There were 450 homicide incidents reported in SHR in Ohio in 2007, resulting in 487 victims. Of the 450 occurrences, 95 percent resulted in the murder of a single victim and five percent resulted in the murder of multiple victims.

Of all incidents in which there was a single victim, 55 percent were committed by a single offender, 17 percent were committed by multiple offenders, and 28 percent were committed by an unknown number of offenders.

Monthly homicide occurrences. Ohio had an average of 37.5 homicide incidents per month. Homicides were at their highest in August, with 51 recorded incidents. The summer months of July, August, and September had the largest number of homicide incidents, accounting for nearly 32 percent of all homicide incidents in the year.
Ohio’s Homicide Victims

Of the 543 homicide victims reported in Ohio in 2008 (per *Crime in the United States 2008*), Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data was provided for 487 victims (approximately 90 percent of all victims). The following data were reported for those victims for whom all or some demographic (age, gender, race) information was available. For many incidents, little or no demographic data were available.

**Gender.** Across nearly all age groups, males were more frequently victims of homicide. Nearly 80 percent of all homicide victims were male.

**Age.** Certain age groups appeared to be more frequent targets of homicide. Overall, the median age of homicide victims was 29 years (mean = 31.4 years). Males had a median homicide age of 28 years (mean = 31.1 years), while females had a median homicide age of 33 years (mean = 32.7 years). The early adulthood years were notable particularly for males, as the peak in the following graph indicates. One-half of all male homicide victims were between the ages of 16 and 30. There were over seven times as many male victims of homicide as female victims of homicide in this age range.
**Race.** Sixty percent of all homicide victims were Black and 38 percent were White. Black males made up 66 percent of male homicide victims and 52 percent of all homicide victims. White males made up 34 percent of male homicide victims and 27 percent of all homicide victims. In contrast, Black female victims made up 41 percent of female homicide victims and eight percent of all homicide victims, whereas White females made up 58 percent of female homicide victims and 12 percent of all victims.
Looking at age, gender, and race together, different patterns emerge regarding Ohio’s victims of homicide. Ages 16 through 30 appeared to be the deadliest time for Black males, as indicated by the peak in the following chart. Sixty-one percent of Black male homicide victims were between the ages of 16 and 30. There was no similar peak for White males, as 30 percent of White males fell within this age group. Due to the low number of female homicide victims, no patterns based on race and age were identifiable.
Ohio’s Homicide Offenders

Demographically, Ohio’s homicide offenders were similar to Ohio’s homicide victims. The following data are reported only for those offenders for whom all or some demographic information was available.

Gender. Male homicide offenders outnumbered female homicide offenders by over ten to one. The number of male offenders equaled or outnumbered the number of female offenders across every age category.

Age. The median age for homicide offenders was 25 years (mean=28.7 years). The median offender age for males was 24, five years younger than the median female offender age of 29.

Similar to the demographics of male homicide victims, the number of male homicide offenders was at its highest between the ages of 16 and 30. Over 67 percent of all male homicide offenders fell into this age range. There was no clear age pattern for female homicide offenders. However, because of the low number of female offenders overall, the female offender data must be interpreted with caution.

![Male Homicide Offenders by Age](chart)
Race. Of those offenders for whom race information was known, Black offenders made up 65 percent of all homicide offenders and White offenders made up 34 percent of all homicide offenders. When broken down by gender, Black males made up 66 percent of male homicide offenders and 60 percent of all homicide offenders. White males made up 34 percent of male homicide offenders and 30 percent of all homicide offenders. Black females made up 47 percent of all female homicide offenders and four percent of all homicide offenders. White females made up 53 percent of all female homicide offenders and five percent of all offenders.
The following two graphs highlight the patterns of offending when all three demographic factors — age, sex, and race — are taken into consideration.

Sixty-six percent of all male offenders fall within the age range of 16 and 30. Broken down further, Black male offenders show a definite peak of activity from age 16 through age 25, with 61 percent of their offending occurring between these ages in particular. The data for White male offenders showed a heightened period of activity between the ages of 16 and 30, but did not display quite as distinct of a peak as did the Black offenders.

Black and White females showed a similar increase in offending beginning in the 16-25 age group and peaking with the 21-25 age group. However, there were so few female offenders—and even fewer with complete age, gender, and race information available—that small fluctuations in the statistics are exaggerated. It is thus difficult to identify specific age trends in the female offender group.
Characteristics of Victim-Offender Relationship

The majority of homicide victims knew their offender, either as a family member, an acquaintance, or an intimate partner. Given that most homicides involve an offender known to the victim, clear patterns of gender and racial relationships are also found between victims and their offenders. The following statistics were obtained from those incidents in which relationship information could be determined.

**Victim-offender gender.** Ninety-four percent of male homicides and 88 percent of female homicides were perpetrated by a male offender. Across all male and female homicides, about eight percent were perpetrated by a female offender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Relationship between Victim and Offender</th>
<th>Female Offender</th>
<th>Male Offender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Victim</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Victim</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Victim-offender race.** There is a great tendency for homicide victims and offenders to be of the same race. Ninety-three percent of Black victims were killed by Black offenders. Likewise, 72 percent of White victims were killed by White offenders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Relationship between Victim and Offender</th>
<th>Black Offender</th>
<th>White Offender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Victim</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Victim</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Single victim-single offender incidents.** Ninety-five percent of homicide incidents involved a single victim. Of these, 55 percent involved a single victim and a single identified offender. Twenty-eight percent were committed by an unknown offender, and 17 percent were committed by multiple offenders (most of these were incidents in which one or more of the offenders was unknown).

The single victim-single offender data were analyzed to gain a better understanding of the relationship between victim and offender. Of the single victim-single offender incidents for which relationship data were known, the overwhelming proportion of offenders were known to the victim. As the following graph shows, only 13 percent of homicide offenders were strangers. For 87 percent of homicides the victim knew the offender, and often the perpetrator was a family member or intimate/former intimate.

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1 Note the distinction between ‘unknown’ and ‘stranger’. ‘Unknown’ means that there is no information on the relationship between victim and offender. ‘Stranger’ means that the victim and offender did not know each other.
That the victim knew the offender was especially true for female victims. Of the single victim-single offender incidents, only seven percent of females (out of all female victims) were murdered by a stranger, compared to 16 percent of male victims (out of all male victims). Additionally, 37 percent of females were murdered by an intimate or former intimate partner, in contrast to 10 percent of male victims.
Weapons Used in Homicides

All homicides involve some sort of weaponry, whether it is a firearm, knife, fist, poison, or other object. For all homicide incidents where the weapon could be determined, the following data were obtained.

Firearms were the leading weapon identified in homicide incidents, making up 65 percent of all identified weapons. Nine percent of weapons used in homicides fell under the category ‘personal weapons’, which includes beatings using hands, feet, fists. Eight percent of homicides involved knives/cutting instruments. Fifteen percent of homicides were due to other unknown weapons.

Differences in weapon usage emerge as a function of gender. Sixty-six percent of male offenders used a firearm to commit homicide, as opposed to 32 percent of females. Of all weapon types, knives/cutting instruments were used by a higher percentage of females than males, although the overall number of homicides committed by females using these weapons remains low.
Arrestees

In 2008, 234 individuals were arrested for homicide. Nearly 91 percent of those arrested were male, and 66 percent of all male arrestees fell between the ages of 15 and 29.

The majority of arrestees for other violent crimes were male. Ninety-nine percent of forcible rape \(^2\) arrestees, 88 percent of robbery arrestees and 79 percent of aggravated assault arrestees were male. Other violent crimes show the same general age pattern, with the number of violent crimes committed by individuals peaking in those in their late teens and twenties. Forty-four percent of forcible rape arrestees, 67 percent of robbery arrestees, and 53 percent of aggravated assault arrestees fell between the ages of 15 and 29.

\(^2\) Forcible rape is defined by the FBI as “The carnal knowledge of a female against her will.” Sexual attacks on males are counted as aggravated assaults or other sex offenses.
Homicides Cleared by Arrest or Exceptional Means

In 2008, the FBI reported that nationally nearly 64 percent of homicides were cleared by arrest or exceptional means\(^3\). Homicide has the highest clearance rate of all Part I violent crimes. Fifty-five percent of aggravated assaults, 40 percent of forcible rapes, and 27 percent of robberies were cleared by arrest or exceptional means nationwide.

Differences in clearance rates emerge as a function of population group, as the following table shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Group</th>
<th>Clearance Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>250,000 or more</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000-249,999</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000-99,999</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000-49,999</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-24,999</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 10,000</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
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</table>

Source: FBI’s *Crime in the United States* 2008

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\(^3\) According to the FBI’s *Crime in the United States* annual report, to clear an arrest by exceptional means, law enforcement must have: 1) Identified the offender; 2) Gathered enough evidence to support an arrest, make a charge, and turn over the offender to the court for prosecution; 3) Identified the offender’s exact location so that the suspect could be taken into custody immediately; 4) Encountered a circumstance outside the control of law enforcement that prohibits the agency from arresting, charging, and prosecuting the offender. Examples include the death of the offender, the victim’s refusal to cooperate with the prosecution, or the denial of extradition.