

Background Memo on Homicide Tracking in Chicago and Cook County

Note: This memo was prepared in July, 2011 and does not include 2011 or 2012 data.

SUBJECT: **Homicide Trends in Chicago and Cook County**

Erica Haft, Colin Johnson, Interns, Center on Wrongful Convictions, Bluhm Legal Clinic, Northwestern University School of Law, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois.

Recent statements made by Chicago politicians have made claims about Chicago's homicide rate compared to the rate in other large cities. Reports released by the various police departments in Cook County allow us to analyze this claim and the statistics behind it in more detail, as well as looking at the trends in the city.

We analyzed the recent trends in the various aspects of homicide¹ rates, both for Chicago and for Cook County as a whole. We were able to gather this data using the Annual Crime in Illinois reports for Cook County, and the Chicago Police Department's Annual Reports for the city itself, for the past ten years, as well as the rates for 1990 and 1995. Since the data for 2011 has not as of the date of the preparation of this memo been published by an official government body, the information for 2011 was drawn from the Chicago Tribune's Crime Finder.

Overall Homicide Trends

In both Cook County as a whole and Chicago itself, homicide has shown a distinct downward trend in recent years. From 2000 through 2010, the number of murders in Chicago has dropped from 631 to 436, the lowest rate for the city since 1965. As of June 27th, 2011, the number of homicides in Chicago for the year was 159. If this holds true for the remaining six months of the year, that would translate to a total of 318 murders, the lowest it has been in decades. However, since violent crime rates have been shown to increase during the summer, this may not be the case. Since 2002, the rate has steadily decreased, with exceptions to this being in 2006, a 4% increase from 447 to 467, and 2008, a 15% increase from 443 to 510. Interestingly, this pattern correlates closely to steady funding of CeaseFire, a Chicago Project for Violence Prevention.² When CeaseFire's funding became unsteady or was partially cut off, the homicide rate also rose, and when funding was restored, the homicide rate decreased. However, additional research would be necessary to determine whether this relationship is causative or a mere correlation.

In Cook County, data were unavailable for 2010. From 2000 to 2009, the crime rate has dropped from 711 to 459. However, this is likely an illusion caused by population changes in the county. While the number of homicides has dropped significantly and more or less consistently

¹ Homicide, in this context, is defined as the killing of a person or death through the criminal act of another, as set forth by the Chicago Police Department.

² CeaseFire is an organization that originated in 2000 in Chicago's West Garfield Park for the purpose of reducing violence, focusing on homicide and firearm violence.

(with the only increases corresponding to the increases in Chicago's homicide rate, discussed above), the rate of homicides per 100,000 people has not changed quite as drastically. While the number of homicides has decreased from 711 to 459, a 35.4% drop, the actual homicide rate has dropped from 13.4 to 10.5, a 21.6% decrease. While this is still substantial, it implies that a large portion of the decrease in the number of homicides in Cook County was caused by population decrease.³

As a percentage of the total number of violent crimes⁴ occurring in Chicago, homicide has risen in the past two decades. In Chicago in 1990, there were 851 murders, comprising 1.03% of the 82,728 violent crimes that occurred. This number rose in the subsequent five years to 1.13% in 1995, 827 homicides out of 73,014 violent crimes. This upward trend continued until 2000, in which the 627 homicides made up approximately 1.28% of the 48,973 violent crimes that took place. This percentage continued to rise until 2003, where the 598 homicides composed 1.51% of the 39,483 violent crimes that took place. It dropped to 1.21% in 2004, but then consistently rose annually until 2008, with 512 murders, 1.43% of the 35,863 violent crimes. After dropping to 1.37% in 2009, the percentage again rose in 2010 to 1.52%, 436 of the 28,686 violent crimes. While the number of homicides in 2010 was the lowest in decades, it actually made up the highest proportion of homicides in the past twenty years. This same trend is observed when the numbers are examined with criminal sexual assault.

Age Trends

The number of homicides committed by each age group in Cook County (grouped by tens) has dropped, corresponding to the decrease in homicides committed overall. The proportion of homicides committed by youths aged 11-20 decreased from 2000 to 2002, from 32.1% to 27.5%. After rising for the next two years, peaking at 36.8% of the overall total number of murders in the year 2004, the number steadily declined through 2008, where it dropped to 27.5%. Following that, it rose in 2009 to 79 murders, 34.4% of the total. There is a less discernible trend in the patterns of those murders committed by individuals aged 21-30. Beginning at 45.9% in 2000, the percentage dropped to 44.0% in 2001, rose to 50.3% in 2002, decreased over the next two years to 39.9% in 2004, rose to 47.5% over the two years following that, dropped to 41.3% in 2007, rose to 50.9% in 2008, and then dropped to 42.1% in 2009. A similar pattern to youths from 11-20 is observed in the percentage of murders involving those aged 31-40. Similar to the other age groups described, the number of homicides rose from 13.6% to 13.8% from 2000 to 2002. It then dropped to 12.9% in 2003 before rising again to 14.5% in 2004. After 2004, however, the percentage dropped steadily every year until 2008, where it reached its low point of 10.6%. In 2009, the percentage rose to 12.7%. Trends in homicides committed by individuals aged from 41-50 and 51-60 have both shown sporadic patterns similar to one another. The percentage of murders committed increased and decreased

³ The population of Cook County in the past decade has dropped from approximately 5.377 million in 2000 to approximately 5.285 million in 2009. Estimates of Cook County's population were drawn from the US Census

⁴ Violent Crimes includes the crimes of homicide, criminal sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault and battery, as defined by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports

alternately every year, but the overall percentage across the decade increased from 5.7% to 6.8% for the 41-50 age group, and from 1.8% to 2.7% for the 51-60 age group. The 51-60 group also included a sharp spike in 2007, rising from 7 homicides in 2006 to 20 homicides in 2007, before falling back to 7 in 2008. The number of homicides committed by individuals aged 61-70 has remained relatively static over the decade, beginning at 2 homicides in 2000 and 2001, dropping to 0 in 2002, then rising over the next three years up to a peak of 4 homicides, before dropping to 0 in 2005 and then rising to 2 and remaining consistent through 2009. However, while the number of homicides remained constant, the corresponding percentage rose from 0.4% in 2000 to 0.9% in 2009. For the 71-80 age group, the number of homicides never rose above 1. There was one homicide in 2002, and one homicide per year from 2005 to 2009. There has only been one homicide committed by someone over the age of 80 in Cook County in the past decade, and that was in 2007.

In terms of overall trends, the average age of homicide offenders appears to have risen from 2000 to 2007, as shown by the fact that a smaller percentage of the years' total homicides were committed by individuals in under-40 age groups, and an increasing percentage committed by the older population. This implies that something is causing younger individuals to be less inclined to commit homicide. However, in the most recent years for which data was available, the percentage of homicides committed by youths has increased compared to those committed by people over 40.

Districts and Areas

Certain districts have a distinct pattern of higher homicide rates in Chicago. Specifically, in the past decade, districts 3-11 have shown a significantly higher number of homicides committed within their borders. This pattern holds when one examines the data from further back, to 1990, although in 1990 there are other districts with high homicide rates. Further, districts 15, 22, and 25 show moderately homicide rates, although these districts are consistently lower than districts 3-12.

District 3-7 and 9-11 have shown consistently high rates of homicide since 1990. The only district that did not have a particularly high rate of homicide in 1990 compared to today was district 8, which only had 12 murders in homicide, compared to 27 in 1995, 32 in 2000, and 36 in 2010. All of the other districts had high rates of homicide in the 90s, and the number of homicides in each of these districts has dropped in subsequent years. In 1990, the district with the highest number of murders was district 7, with 91, and the lowest number was located in district 9, with 33. In 1995, the number of murders was highest now in district 11 with 81. The lowest number was now in district 6, at 38. While the higher number dropped, though, every district falling within this range except for district 7 actually increased the numbers of homicides between 1990 and 1995. By 2000, however, every district from 3-7 and 9-11 had shown a decrease in the number of murders. The highest this year was again district 11, with 67, and the lowest was now district 4, with 31. During the subsequent decade, the numbers gradually declined with occasional spikes, particularly during the years 2001 and 2002. In 2010, the range of homicide numbers in these districts had fallen to between 49, again in district 11, and 28, in

both districts 9 and 3. In fact, excluding 2005 and 2006, district 11 has had the highest murder rate every year since 1995.

District 15 showed a similar trend to the districts described above, albeit with smaller numbers. In 1990, the district had 41 murders, actually placing it at the 9th highest district for that year. It actually increased to 45 murders in 1995 before dropping to 29 in 2000. It increased again from 29 in 2000 to 45 in 2002, after which it declined consistently until 2005, at 18. It rose to 25 in 2006, dropped to 22 in 2007, and rose again to 30 in 2008. However, after 2008, it dropped to reach a low of 18 murders in 2010.

District 22 is unique in that it is the only district (apart from district 16, which rose from 4 murders in 1990 to 5 in 2010) that has actually increased its number of homicides from 1990 to 2010. In 1990, there were 20 homicides. This number rose to 22 in 1995 before falling to 16 in 2000. It rose to 18 in 2001, fell to 14 in 2002, and then jumped again to 20 in 2003. It then decreased for two years to 10 in 2005, jumped to 18 in 2006, and fell to 17 during 2007 and 2008. After 2008, however, it rose to 19 in 2009 and 24 in 2010. This district was singular in this respect, particularly among other districts that had a homicide rate in 1990 higher than 10, in that it did not show an overall improvement across the decades.

District 25, while remaining in the higher half of districts for homicide numbers, has shown a significant improvement. In 1990, 35 homicides occurred within it. This number was repeated in 2000, after which it rose for two years to 40 in 2002. It dropped to 29 across 2003 and 2004, spiked to 36 in 2005, and then fell for two years to 22 in 2007. After another spike to 30 in 2008, the number dropped to 19 in 2009 and 16 in 2010.

All of the districts not discussed here have either shown significant improvements in their homicide totals (such as districts 12, 14, 21, and 23, which dropped from 44, 38, 23, and 24, to 8, 3, 2, and 5, respectively), or have had minimal changes in their homicide totals, but the actual numbers remained under 10. The most dramatic decrease was found in district 2. Having finished in 1990 with the highest homicide rate of all the districts, 98, the number plummeted to 33 in 1995. Since then, the number has fluctuated slightly but shown a net decrease, finishing 2010 at 19. Furthermore, it should be noted that, when comparing the homicide numbers for every year from 2000-2010 as well as 1995 and 1990, there is only one instance where a district had zero murders for a year. This occurred in district 19 during 2010, a significant decrease from its high points of 10 in 1990 and 11 in 2002. Today, in terms of number of homicides, the safest districts are district 19 with 0, district 1 with 1, districts 18, 20, and 21 with 2 homicides, and district 14 with 3.

The most dangerous districts correspond to specific police areas within Chicago. The districts with over 30 homicides in 2010 were numbers 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11. Districts 7 and 8 are both in area 1, districts 4 and 6 are in area 2, and districts 10 and 11 are in area 4. This pattern holds true when the range is expanded to include those districts that had over 20 murders. In addition to the above, this also includes districts 3, 5, 7, 9, and 22. Districts 7 and 9 are in area 1, and the other three area in area 2. Thus, we can conclude that, on average, area 2 is the most

dangerous in terms of homicide, followed by area 1 and then area 4. If one looks at the locations of these areas within Chicago, it becomes apparent that, on average, the city is the most dangerous towards the south and the number of homicides decreases towards the northern sections.

Districts by Race

The racial data from the 2010 Census has not been analyzed and broken down into individual district populations. All of the police and other reports use the information from the 2000 Census. Since some districts have consistently been more dangerous than other since 2000, however, the racial data can still be compared to the homicide breakdowns.

The reports divided the races of Chicago into five categories: African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian, and Other. The population of Chicago was 36.9% African American, 31.4% Caucasian, 26.1% Hispanic, 4.5% Asian, and 1.1% Other, out of a total population of 2,895,700. These ratios, as would be expected, were not uniformly distributed throughout the city, but instead are concentrated within certain districts.

Districts 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 15 were all almost exclusively African American. The percentages of African Americans in these districts were all over 90%, ranging from 91.7% in district 11 to 98.7% in district 6. These were the only districts in the city that had a percentage above 90% of any of the racial categories. In districts 4, 21, and 22, the ratio of African Americans, while not as overwhelming as the above districts, still remained in the majority. District 22, at 62.4%, was the highest of these, while district 21, at 58.1%, was the lowest. There was another sizable gap between these three districts and the next group, which included districts 1, 8, 10, 12, and 13. These districts ranged from 34.5% African American in district 10, to 20.8% African American in district 12. Districts 9, 18, 20, 23, 24, and 25 all fell between 12.3% in district 20 to 19.5% in district 24. Districts 14, 16, 17, and 19 all had percentages of African Americans under 10%, district 16 being notable because it was only 0.7% African American, with only 1422 African American citizens out of a total of almost 200,000.

District 16, at 80.4% Caucasian, had the highest percentage of Caucasians in the city. Slightly below it were districts 20 and 21, at 75.0% and 74.3%, respectively. Districts 1 and 23 also had a majority population of Caucasians, with 54.1% and 65.9%. Districts 8, 13, 17, 20, 22, and 24 had populations from 34.7% in district 22, to 47.6% in district 20. Districts 4, 9, 12, 14, 21, and 25 fell within the range of 11.6% in district 4 up to 28.0% in district 14. The remaining districts (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 15) all had percentages under 10%. Six of these eight districts, numbers 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 15, had percentages under 2%.

No percentages for Hispanics ever approached those reached in the areas with the greatest concentrations of Caucasian or African American citizens. Districts 9, 10, 12, 14, and 25 all had percentages over 50%, ranging from district 12's 50.1% to district 10's 61.4%. The next group included districts 4, 8, 13, 17, 20, and 24, and ranged from 20.9% in district 24 to 40.4% in district 17. Districts 16, 19, and 23 fell in the 10-20 gap, from 11.6% in district 23 to 15.9% in 19.

The remaining eleven districts had under 10%, and districts 2, 3, 6, 7, and 22 were all at or under 2%, ranging from 2% in 22 to 0.6% in 6.

The percentage of Asians in Chicago districts was significantly lower than the percentages of the other races. Districts 1, 17, 20, 21, and 24 were the only ones that were over 10% Asian, ranging from 10.6% in district 1 to 16.3% in district 20. There were four districts between 5% and 10%, numbers 9, 12, 18, and 23, with the lowest being 5.5% in district 18 and the highest being district 23 with 8.0%. All of the remaining districts were under 5%, and eleven of them, number 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, and 22 being under 1%. The lowest percentage was a five-way tie between 2, 5, 6, 7, and 10, each at 0.1%.

The percentage of Other races in Chicago districts was negligible. None surpassed 2.5%, only numbers 13, 17, 20, and 24 were above 2% (ranging from 2.1% in 20 to 2.4% in 13 and 17), and fifteen of them were at or below 1%.

The districts that consistently had the highest homicide rates (3-7, 9-11, 15) as discussed above were all districts with a majority of the population as either African American or Hispanic. However, the reverse is not true. While the majority of the populations of districts 2, 21, 22, and 25, were either African American or Hispanic, they had lower homicide rates than some of the others. In fact, the most drastic improvements in homicide rates occurred in district 2, which has a population that is 98.3% African American. The districts with a majority of Caucasian citizens, numbers 1, 16, 18, 19, and 23, as well as those with the largest numbers of Asian citizens, had consistently lower homicide rates. In fact, district 19 was the only district in the past decade to achieve zero homicides in a year, and contained a majority of Caucasian citizens.

That being said, there is no clear evidence that shows that racial disparities cause differing homicide rates. Since no causative experiments have been done, one cannot conclude that race is a causative factor in the varying homicide rates, and must only be viewed as a correlative.

Homicide by Race

Since the year 2000, the number of murder arrests in Chicago has decreased for the three races with the greatest representation in Chicago: African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic. However, this has also corresponded to a similar decrease in the total number of murders committed. Asians, Native Americans, and Other, the three other classifications, have had a negligible number of murder arrests. To get an accurate picture of racial homicide trends, it is necessary to compare the percentages for each race to the total number of murders for each year.

The percentage of homicides committed by African Americans has actually increased since the year 1990, even though the number has dropped from 633 to 273. In the year 1995, the percentage was 72.6%. It dropped to 70.9% by 1999, then rose again to 72.9% in 2000. After dropping to 71.81% in 2001, it jumped to 78.5% in 2002. It showed a relatively steady decrease,

excluding increases from 75.2% to 77.8% in 2005 and from 76.2% to 77.4% in 2007. However, as of 2009, 75.2% of murder arrests in Chicago were targeted towards African Americans. This percentage is significantly higher than either the 1995 or 2000 values.

The percentage of murder arrests targeted towards Caucasians is the only group classified by the Chicago Police Department that has seen an overall decrease since 1999. In 1990, there was no Hispanic classification, and Hispanic individuals were grouped together with Caucasians, so it is untenable to compare the 1995 data to today's data without being able to separate the two. Still, in 1999, Caucasians made up 7.5% of murder arrests. This number dropped to 5.9% and remained constant there through 2001 before dropping to 2.9% in 2002. The percentage rose again through 2004, where it reached 5.1%. It dropped to 3.4% in 2005, and then rose consistently through 2008, peaking at 4.5% in 2008. In 2009, the number decreased to 2.8%, the lowest percentage in the last decade.

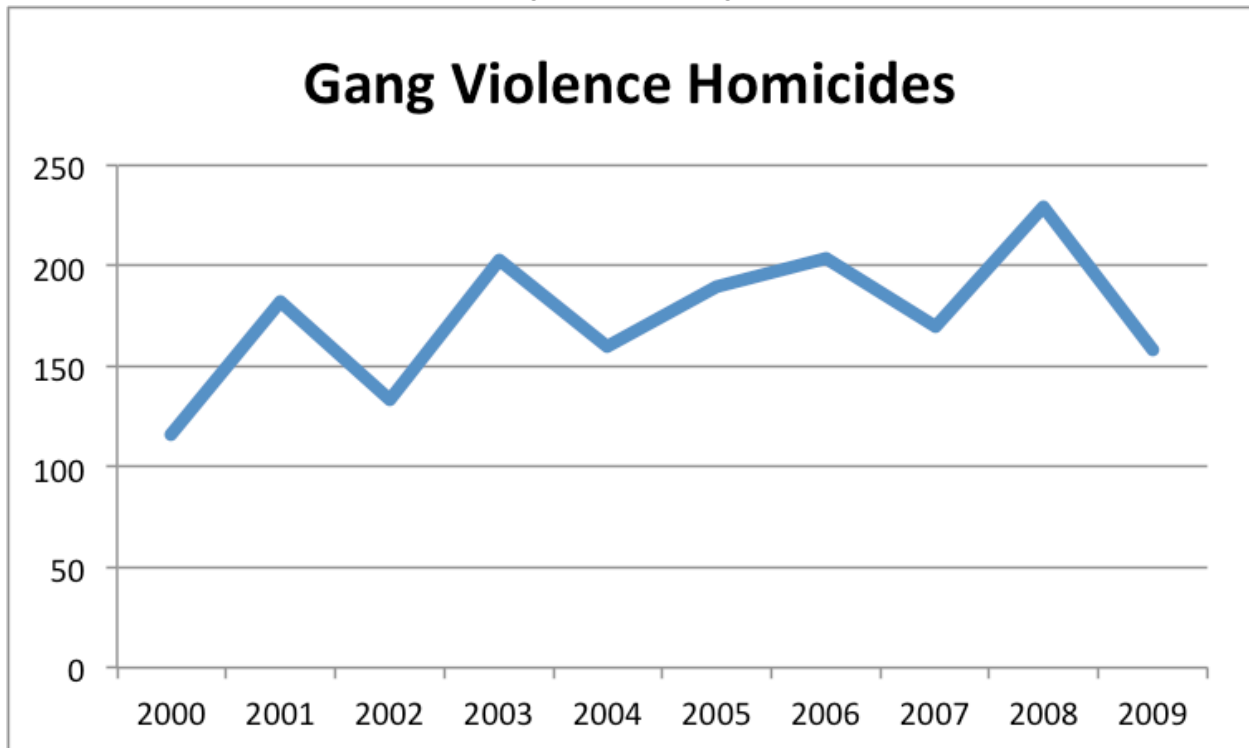
The percentage of murder arrests involving Hispanics has been roughly the shape of a well curve. After a sharp drop, has climbed back to previous levels and has thus remained relatively the same as in 1999. In 1999, the percentage was 21.2%. It rose to 21.5% through 2001, and then dropped to 17.9% in 2002. It then proceeded to climb steadily every year through 2009 excluding 2005, where it dropped from 19.4% to 18.5%, and 2007, where it dropped from 20.2% to 18.4%. By 2009, the percentage had reached 21.8%, slightly above where it began in 1999.

Homicide Types

Index crimes are those crimes considered more serious by the FBI, defined as homicide, aggravated assault, forcible rape, robbery (the four violent crimes), arson, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft (the four property crimes). Because the FBI's Universal Crime Reports have not used a consistent set of groupings for homicide types, it is difficult to compare some of the statistics. However, the patterns that are comparable appear to be decreasing. The most recently used categories for the homicide's motivation are violent altercations, child abuse, domestic issues, gang violence, robbery, another index crime, any other type, and those cases still being investigated. In Chicago, there have been substantial decreases in all of the areas, save for gangs. The most drastic improvements have been in those homicides involving robbery and those involving violent altercations. Violent altercations are simply physical conflicts between individuals or groups that may or may not involve a weapon, that are not categorized as gang violence. Robbery-related homicide has dropped from 83 to 32, and violent altercations leading to homicide dropped from 131 to 81. The number of homicides involving cases under investigation, meaning active cases for which police have not yet been able to identify relevant details to determine its category, shows a similarly downward trend. After rising from 135 cases in 2000 to 180 cases in 2001, the numbers began falling rapidly. After rising from 106 in 2002 to 157 in 2003, the number plummeted over the next few years, sinking to 50 cases in 2005. After two years of extremely small increases to 53 in 2006 and 56 in 2007, the number dropped again, to 49 in 2008. In 2009 the number of cases under investigation increased dramatically, rising from the previously mentioned 49 in 2008 to 123 in 2009 at the end of the years in question. Gang violence is the only categorization that has not shown any major trend,

upwards or downwards. According to the Chicago Police Department, a gang is defined as “an organized group with a recognized leader whose activities are either criminal or at the very least threatening to the community”⁵ Following this, gang violence is simply an act of violence involving one or more gangs. The number of homicides involving gang violence started at 212 murders in 2000, and consistently alternated between rising and falling with every year that went by, with 229 murders at the end of 2008 and 158 in 2009. Overall, the average number of gang-related homicides in the past decade is approximately 178, and appears to have a slight upward trend, as shown in Table 1. However, this pattern is slight and since the number fluctuates so frequently, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to conclusively identify any overall trend in the numbers.

The proportion of homicides using a firearm has shown a relatively steady increase since 1990. In 1990, the 601 firearm homicides made up 70.6% of the 851 total homicides. By 1995, while the total number of homicides had decreased to 827, the number of them involving a firearm rose to 609, 73.6%. By 2000, the percentage had increased to 75.1%, with 471 homicides by firearm out of 627 total. This trend continued through 2003, where the 488 murders with a firearm made up 81.6% of the 598 total. After dropping to 75.5% in 2004, the percentage again began to climb consistently through 2006 at 81.53%. In 2007 the percentage dropped to 73.985, with 327 firearm homicides out of 442 total. This percentage was the lowest it had been since 1995. However, the number has again risen through 2009, reaching 376 firearm homicides out of 459 total, for a peak of 81.92%, the highest percentage out of the data we examined.



⁵ "Gang Awareness." *ClearPath*. Chicago Police Department. Web. <<https://portal.chicagopolice.org/portal/page/portal/ClearPath/Communities/Gang%20Awareness>>.

Table 1: Trend in Gang-Related Homicide 2000-2009

Crime Trend Addendum

According to the Chicago Police Department's Annual Report, 433 homicides took place in Chicago during 2011 continuing the overall trend of declining homicide rates in Chicago. However, the opening months of 2012 have brought with it a spike in the overall number of homicides. According to the Chicago Tribune, as of May 27, 2012, there has already been over 200 murders in the city of Chicago in 2012, marking a near 50 percent increase in the city's homicide rate during the same period in 2011.