

**Arizona Violent Death Reporting System:
Annual Report on Homicide 2015**



**By the
Center for Violence Prevention & Community Safety
Arizona State University**



Table of Contents

About the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
DATA AND METHODS.....	1
FINDINGS.....	2
Homicides in Arizona, 2015	2
Incident Characteristics.....	5
Weapon Used.....	7
Victim and Suspect Demographic Characteristics	9
Cumulative Risk for Homicide	12
Victim/Suspect Relationship	13
Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Victims.....	14
Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Suspects	15
CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY	16
REFERENCES.....	18

About the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety

In order to become more committed to the Arizona community and to society as a whole, Arizona State University is setting a new standard for research universities through the model of the New American University. As a New American University, ASU is measured not by who we exclude, but by who we include; our pursuit of research that considers the public good; and we assume major responsibility for the economic, social, and cultural vitality of our community. Social embeddedness is core to the development of ASU as the New American University. Social embeddedness is a university-wide, interactive, and mutually-supportive partnership with the communities of Arizona.

Toward the goal of social embeddedness, Arizona State University established the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety in July 2005 to respond to the growing need of Arizona's communities to improve the public's safety and well-being. The Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety is a research unit within the College of Public Service and Community Solutions at Arizona State University. The Center's mission is to generate, share, and apply quality research and knowledge to create "best practice" standards. The center specifically evaluates policies and programs, analyze evaluates patterns and causes of violence, develops strategies and programs, develops a clearinghouse of research reports and "best practice" models, educates, trains and provides technical assistance, and facilitates the development of and construction of databases. For more information about the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety please contact us using the information provided below.

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We thank and acknowledge the cooperation and support of the Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Vital Records, and the many local law enforcement agencies and medical examiner offices throughout the State of Arizona that have provided information to the AZ-VDRS. Without our partners the AZ-VDRS would not be possible. The agencies that provided data for this report are:

Apache County Medical Examiner's Office	Mesa Police Department
Coconino County Medical Examiner's Office	Oro Valley Police Department
Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office	Paradise Valley Police Department
Mohave County Medical Examiner's Office	Peoria Police Department
Navajo County Medical Examiner's Office	Phoenix Police Department
Pima County Medical Examiner's Office	Prescott Police Department
Pinal County Medical Examiner's Office	Prescott Valley Police Department
Yavapai County Medical Examiner's Office	Safford Police Department
Yuma County Medical Examiner's Office	Sahuarita Police Department
	Scottsdale Police Department
Apache Junction Police Department	Sedona Police Department
Avondale Police Department	Show Low Police Department
Buckeye Police Department	Sierra Vista Police Department
Casa Grande Police Department	St. Johns Police Department
Chandler Police Department	Surprise Police Department
Chino Valley Police Department	Tempe Police Department
Douglas Police Department	Tucson Police Department
El Mirage Police Department	
Flagstaff Police Department	Coconino County Sheriff Department
Gilbert Police Department	Maricopa County Sheriff Department
Glendale Police Department	Pima County Sheriff Department
Kingman Police Department	Yuma County Sheriff Department
Lake Havasu Police Department	
Marana Police Department	ADHS, Bureau of Vital Records
Maricopa City Police Department	

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During 2015 the AZ-VDRS Advisory Board provided input, advice and support. These individuals and their agencies were paramount to establishing and maintaining the program in its first year. We would like to especially thank Tomi St. Mars and Pam Goslar for their serving as the executive leaders of the steering committee. They have been our strongest champions and provided continuous leadership throughout the project. We would be remiss if we did not thank our CDC science officer Dr. Shane Davis and our CDC project officer Michele LaLand for their tireless support and answering all of our questions.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States is known to have high levels of violent death, particularly homicide, in comparison to other developed countries. In 2014, according to National Vital Statistic System (NVSS) data, homicide accounts for about 16,000 deaths in the United States and ranks within the top three leading causes of death among U.S. residents aged between 15 and 34 years (Kochanek et al., 2016). Considerable research has examined changes in patterns of homicide in the United States over the past 30 years. For example, the National Center for Health Statistics (2017) found that since 1950 homicide rates have been higher among males and adolescents and young adults who are between 15 and 34 years old. In addition, the homicide rate is the highest among Black males (35.4 deaths per 100,000), followed by American Indian males (9.8 deaths per 100,000) and Hispanic males (7.9 deaths per 100,000). Homicide can have profound long-term psychological distresses (e.g., intrusive repetitive imagery, overwhelming anger, fear, hypervigilance) on families and friends of homicide victims (see Armour, 2002). Homicide can also produce excessive economic costs to residents of affected communities (Hamermesh, 1999; also see Skaperdas et al., 2009).

Given the importance of the problem, a body of research has largely focused on national level homicide patterns and trends for the propose of assisting federal officials to allocate fiscal resources to the areas of need and helping local officials develop more targeted responses to the homicide problem. However, there is a need for understanding the scope and nature of the homicide problem at state and local levels in order to inform local and state authorities to assist in determining the proper allocation of resources and cultivate discussion about more effective strategies to respond to homicide problems. This report presents findings from the Arizona Violent Death Reporting System (AZ-VDRS), which is sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and describes homicide patterns and trends in Arizona in 2015. In doing so, we examine circumstances surrounding homicide incidents, the general characteristics of victims and suspects, and the geographic characteristics where homicides took place.

DATA AND METHODS

Data presented in this report are from the Arizona Violent Death Reporting System (AZ-VDRS), which serves as a site within the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS). NVDRS is a national state-based surveillance system for violent deaths developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 1989. As of 2016, 42 states, including Arizona, are participating in NVDRS. The primary goal of NVDRS is to provide high quality data useful for prevention of all types of violence including homicide, suicide, unintentional firearm deaths, legal intervention, and deaths for which intent could not be determined. The violent death data are collected from four principle sources and used to populate a usable, anonymous database. The four sources include death certificates, medical examiner reports, law enforcement reports, and crime laboratory records. NVDRS contain data on victim/suspect demographics and specific circumstances about the incident including mental health problems, recent problems with a job, finances, or relationships, physical health problems, etc.

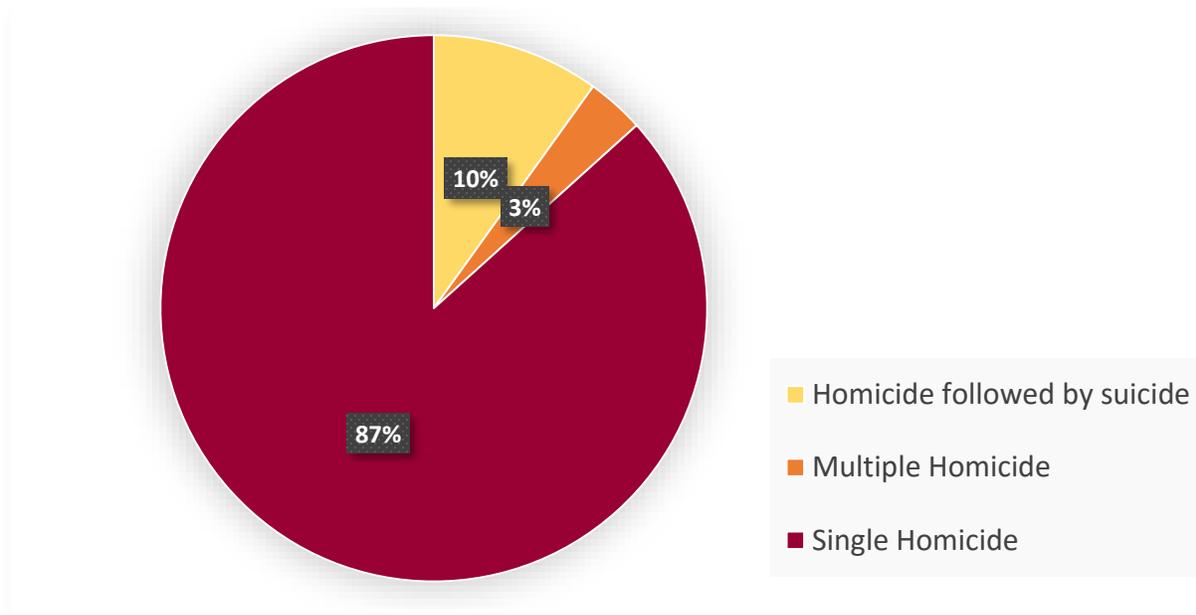
This report used data gathered on all decedents in the AZ-VDRS database who were victims of homicide during the period January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015. Deaths from legal intervention, which refers to a subtype of homicide where the victim is killed by or died as a result of law enforcement acting in the line of duty are not included in this study. Both incident- and victim-based data are analyzed for this report; which includes information about victims and suspects in each incident and their relationships, and population estimates used for the calculation of homicide rates was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

FINDINGS

Homicides in Arizona, 2015

In 2015, there were a total of 314 incidents resulting in 322 homicide victims in Arizona. There were 279 victims of single homicide (86.6%), 32 victims of homicide followed by the suicide of the perpetrator (9.9%), and 11 victims of multiple homicide (3.4%, see Exhibit 1).

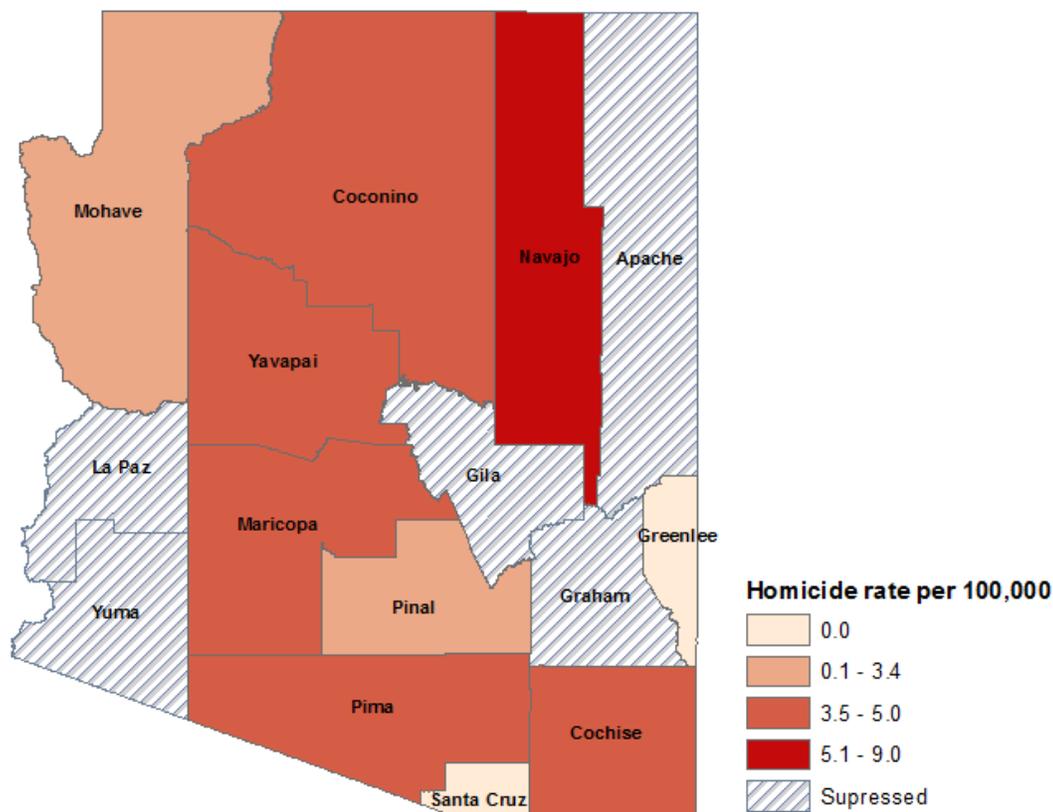
Exhibit 1: Homicides in Arizona by Type, 2015 (n=322)



The Arizona statewide homicide rate was 4.7 per 100,000 population, which is a little less than the national homicide rate, 4.9 per 100,000, as reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.¹ The vast majority of the homicides occurred in Maricopa County. Specifically, 62.7% (n=202) of the homicides occurred in Maricopa County, 14.9% (n=48) in Pima county, and 22.4% (n=72) occurred in counties throughout the rest of the state.

If we exclude counties with less than five homicides or populations less than 100,000, consistent with CDC recommended reporting guidelines, residents in Navajo County were at higher risk for homicide than those in other counties (see Exhibit 2). The homicide rate in Navajo County was 8.2 per 100,000 population, compared with 5.0 per 100,000 in Maricopa County and a rate of 4.8 in Pima County, the second and third highest homicide rates in Arizona, among reportable populations. There were no homicides reported in Greenlee or Santa Cruz Counties, and 2.3% (n=7) of the total homicides occurred in an unknown location.

Exhibit 2: Homicide Rate per 100,000 Population in Arizona

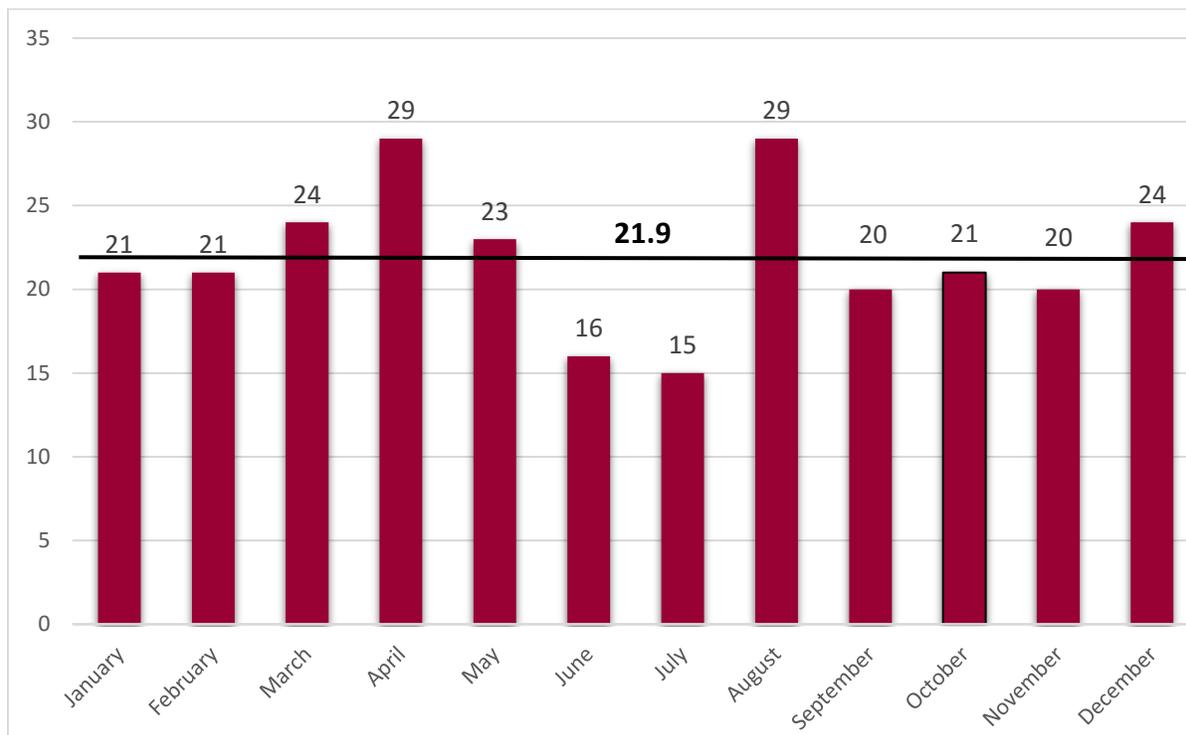


*Note: Findings are suppressed for counties that have fewer than five homicides or have a population of less than 100,000 (see legend above).

¹ The national rate includes murders, non-negligent manslaughter, and legal intervention incidents.

We also examined temporal patterns among Arizona homicides by month (see Exhibit 3). There was a low of 15 homicides in July, closely followed by 16 in June, to a maximum of 29 in April and August. Overall, there was a mean of 21.9 (SD=4.29) homicides per month, which puts both April (n=29) and August (n=29) at a statistically higher than expected homicide rate.

Exhibit 3: Number of Homicides by Month, 2015



*Note. There were 59 cases where date of injury was unknown.

Incident Characteristics

The incident characteristics are detailed in Exhibits 4 and 5. Exhibit 4 indicates the number of victims and suspects per homicide incident and Exhibit 5 presents the type of location where the injury incident occurred per victim. First, the analysis (see Exhibit 4) shows that the majority of the homicides (66.0%) were classified as Single Victim/Single Suspect. The overall percentage of single-victim homicide incidents was 94.2. In addition, about 70.2 percent of homicides involved only one suspect, 19.2 percent of homicides involved multiple suspects, and there was an unknown number of suspects in 10.6 percent of incidents.

Exhibit 4: Number of Victims and Suspects per Homicide Event (n=314)

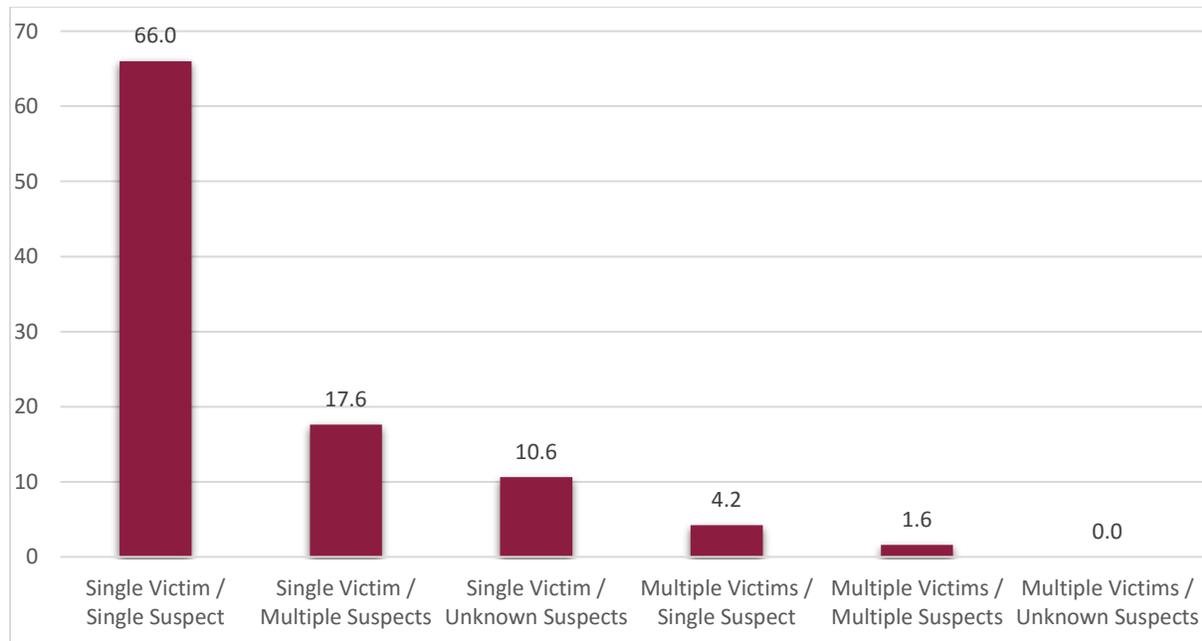


Exhibit 5: Location Type of Injury Incident, per Homicide Victim (n = 322)

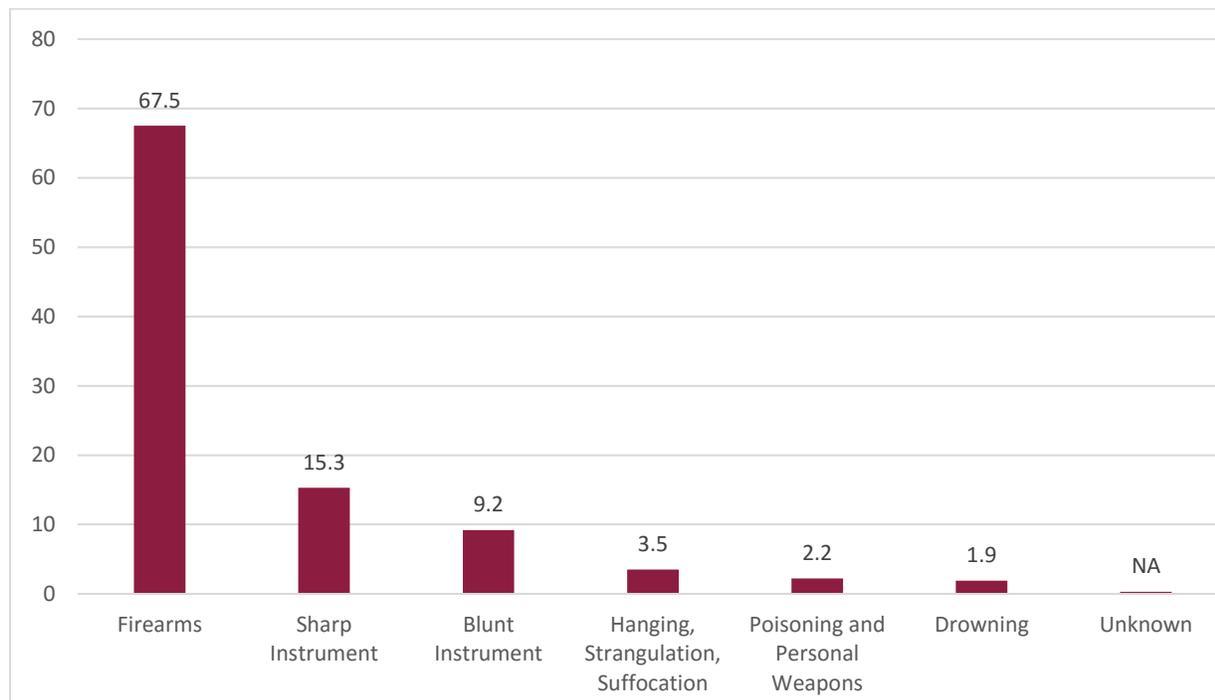
	Frequency	Percent
House, apartment	169	52.5
At victim's home	121	37.6
Not at victim's home	40	12.4
Unknown home	8	2.5
Street/road, sidewalk, alley, highway, freeway	41	12.7
Parking lot/public parking garage	25	7.8
Natural area (e.g., field, river, beaches, woods)	14	4.3
Jail, prison, detention facility	7	2.2
Bar, nightclub	6	1.9
Motor vehicle (excluding school bus and public transportation)	6	1.9
Park, playground, public use area, and commercial establishment (e.g., grocery store, retail outlet, etc.)	5	1.6
Other (e.g., Hospital or medical facility, hotel/motel, office building, public transportation or station, service station, farm, etc.)	15	4.7
Unknown	34	10.6
Total	322	100.0

Exhibit 5 presents findings on the location where the homicide occurred (see Exhibit 5). About 52.5 percent (n=169) of homicide victims were injured in a house or apartment, and, of these, 71.6 percent (n=121; 37.6% of all victims) were injured in their own home. About 20.5 percent (n=66) of victims were injured in a street, alley, highway or parking lot. Cumulatively, 5.9 percent (n=19) of victims were injured in outdoor areas such as parks, fields and other natural areas. Approximately, 11 percent (n=34) of victims were injured at an unknown location.

Weapon Used

Exhibit 6 shows the type of weapon used in Arizona homicides per incident. A firearm was used in 67.5 percent of homicides, followed by sharp instrument (15.3%), blunt instrument (9.2%), hanging, strangulation, suffocation (3.5%), poisoning and personal weapons (2.2%), or drowning (1.9%). The weapon used was unknown in less than 1% (0.3%) of homicides.

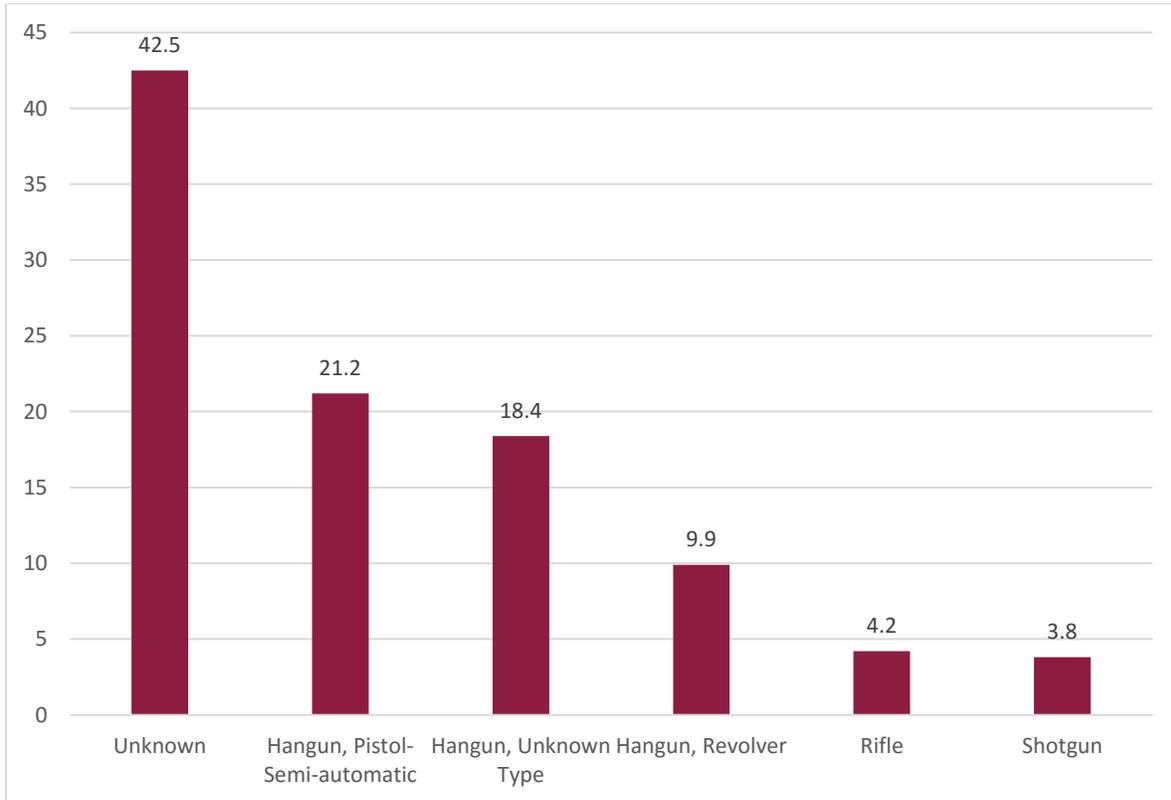
Exhibit 6: Weapon Type (n=314)



*Note. Personal weapons include fists, feet, and hands in actions such as punching, kicking or hitting

Exhibit 7 shows the type of firearm used per incident in Arizona homicides. Of a total of 212 firearm related homicides, a semi-automatic pistol/handgun was used in 21.2 percent, followed by unknown type of handguns (18.4%), revolvers (9.9%), rifles (4.2%), and shotguns (3.8%). The type of firearm used was unknown in 42.5 percent of incidents.

Exhibit 7: Homicide by Firearm Type (n=212)



Victim and Suspect Demographic Characteristics

Exhibit 8a-8c show the characteristics of victims and suspects involved in Arizona homicides. Exhibit 8a indicates that the majority of victims and suspects involved in homicide were male. Specifically, 76.1 percent (n=245) of homicide victims were male and 67.8 percent (n=215) of suspects were male. With respect to age, victims and suspects were most likely to be between the ages of 15 and 34.

Exhibit 8a: Demographic Characteristics of Homicide Victims and Suspects Known to Law Enforcement

	Victims (n = 322)		Suspects (n = 317)		General population (n = 6,828,065)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Gender</i>						
Male	245	76.1	215	67.8	3,387,385	49.6
Female	77	23.9	29	9.2	3,440,680	50.4
Unknown	0	0	73	23.0	-	-
<i>Age</i>						
0 – 14	16	5.0	NA	NA	1,346,069	19.7
15 – 24	77	23.9	61	19.2	945,042	13.8
25 – 34	93	28.9	56	17.7	914,761	13.4
35 – 44	48	14.9	28	8.8	845,274	12.4
45 – 54	47	14.6	25	7.9	842,972	12.3
55 – 64	21	6.5	5	1.6	813,943	11.9
65 – 74	12	3.7	NA	NA	652,858	9.6
75 +	7	2.2	NA	NA	467,146	6.8
Unknown/Missing	1	0.3	136	42.9		
Mean (SD)	35.01 (16.58)		32.31 (14.13)			

*Note. Population estimate sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

The numbers are suppressed for columns that have fewer than five deaths, except for unknown or unspecified cases.

Exhibit 8b shows that Whites were the most likely to be involved in a homicide when compared to other racial groups. About 68 percent (n=220) of victims were White, followed by 16.2 percent (n=52) who were Black, 9.6 percent (n=31) who were American Indian, 1.9 percent (n=6) who were Asian, and 3.1 percent (n=10) were an unspecified race. Likewise, 37.5 percent (n=119) of suspects were White, 13.9 percent (n=44) were Black, and about 47 percent (n=148) of suspects were an unspecified race. With regard to the victim and suspect's ethnicity, 33.2 percent (n=107) of victims and 18.0 percent (n=57) of suspects were identified as Hispanic.

Exhibit 8b: Demographic Characteristics of Homicide Victims and Suspects Known to Law Enforcement

	Victims (n = 322)		Suspects (n = 317)		General population (n = 6,828,065)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Race</i>						
White	220	68.3	119	37.5	5,285,994	77.4
Black	52	16.2	44	13.9	300,685	4.4
Native American	31	9.6	NA	NA	308,469	4.5
Asian	6	1.9	0	0	217,556	3.2
Pacific Islander	0	0	NA	NA	11,284	0.2
Multi-Race	NA	NA	0	0	222,446	3.3
Unspecified Race	10	3.1	148	46.7		
<i>Ethnicity</i>						
Hispanic	107	33.2	57	18.0	2,098,411	30.7
Non-Hispanic	211	65.5	95	30.0	4,729,654	69.3
Unknown/Missing	4	1.2	165	51.0		

*Note. Population estimate sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

The numbers are suppressed for columns that have fewer than five deaths, except for unknown or unspecified cases.

We also examined the marital status, education, and birth place of victims. Exhibit 8c indicates that about 62 percent (n=199) of victims were never married, 18 percent (n=58) were married, and 11.5 percent (n=37) were divorced at the time of the homicide. Few of the victims were found to be separated (2.2%, n=7) from their spouse or widowed (2.5%, n=8). In terms of educational attainment, 37.6 percent (n=121) of victims were high school graduates, followed by 35.1 percent (n=112) who had less than completed high school or GED equivalency, 12.4 percent (n=40) who had obtained some college credit, and 9.4 percent (n=30) who had earned a college degree of some type. Our findings also indicate that the majority of homicide victims in Arizona were born in the United States. About 43.8 percent (n=141) of victims were born in Arizona, 44.4 percent (n=143) were born in other U.S. states, and 8.4 percent (n=27) of victims were born outside the United States.

Exhibit 8c: Demographic Characteristics of Homicide Victims and Suspects Known to Law Enforcement

	Victims (n = 322)		General population (n = 6,828,065)	
	n	%	n	%
Marital Status^a				
Never married	199	61.8	1,837,146	33.5
Married/Civil Union/Domestic Partnership	58	18.0	2,541,103	46.4
Divorced	37	11.5	93,804	1.7
Married, but separated	7	2.2	702,520	12.8
Widowed	8	2.5	307,423	5.6
Unknown/Missing	13	4.0	-	-
Education^b				
< 8th grade	33	10.2	271,316	6
9th-12th grade	79	24.5	359,657	7.9
High School or GED	121	37.6	1,110,871	24.5
Some college credit	40	12.4	1,155,555	25.5
Associate	9	2.8	382,106	8.4
Bachelor	15	4.7	788,933	17.4
Master +	6	1.9	468,516	10.3
Unknown	19	5.9	-	-
Birth Place				
Arizona	141	43.8	2,679,897	39.2
Other states	143	44.4	3,135,027	45.9
Other Countries	27	8.4	1,013,141	14.8
Unknown/Missing	11	3.4	-	-

Note. Population estimate sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

The numbers are suppressed for columns that have fewer than five deaths, except for unknown or unspecified cases.

a. Population estimates are based on 15 years and over.

b. Population estimates are based on 25 years and over.

Cumulative Risk for Homicide

We examined the cumulative risk for homicide among higher risk populations in Arizona. The analysis (as shown in Exhibit 9) shows that the homicide rate per 100,000 population for males in Arizona was 7.2, which is higher than the overall homicide rate in Arizona of 4.9 per 100,000 population. Males aged 15 to 34 made up the most common age group for victims of homicide, and thus cumulatively, males aged 15 to 34 had a homicide rate of 14.6 per 100,000. In addition, when ethnicity and race are taken into account, the homicide rates among Hispanic, Native American, and Black males between the age of 15 and 34 were at greatest risk with homicide rates of 14.3, 26.7, and 67.2, respectively. Further, homicide rates for Hispanic males aged 15 to 34 were nearly triple, for Native Americans more than five times as high, and for Black victims nearly fourteen times greater than the overall statewide homicide rate (4.7 per 100,000 population).

Exhibit 9: Cumulative Risk for Homicide

Victim Characteristic(s)	# of Homicide Victims	Population	Homicide rate per 100,000
Male	245	3,387,385	7.2
Male, ages 15 to 34	140	957,239	14.6
Male, ages 15 to 34, Hispanic	52	364,154	14.3
Male, ages 15 to 34, Native American	14	52,437	26.7
Male, ages 15 to 34, Black	37	55,037	67.2

*Note. Population estimate sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Victim/Suspect Relationship

Findings about relationships between the victim and suspect are presented in Exhibit 10. Our analysis indicated that almost 16 percent (n=50) of suspects were close family members of victims including spouses, parents, children, and siblings, and another 3.8 percent (n=12) were other relatives (e.g. cousins, in-laws, stepchildren, etc.). Nearly one in five (19.3%, n=61) suspects were either friends or acquaintances of the victim. Current or former romantic partners (i.e. boyfriend or girlfriend) were suspects in 6 percent (n=19) of homicide incidents. Collectively, about 56.6 percent (n=179) of homicides involved a suspect who was known to the victim(s). Approximately 9 percent (n=29) of suspects were strangers. Findings also showed that nearly one-third (n=103) of victim/suspect relationships were unspecified or unknown.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) was a contributing circumstance in 25.6 percent of homicide cases. These cases involved physical, sexual and/or psychological violence that occurred in the context of a current or former relationship, and where a perpetrator may abuse power in order to control his/her partner. In our data, intimate partner includes victims' family members such as spouses and parents (15.8%), other family members including cousins, uncles, and in-law (3.8%), and intimate partners (e.g., girlfriend or boyfriend) (6.0%).

Exhibit 10: Victim/Suspect Relationship (n=317)

	# of suspects	%
Family members (e.g., spouse, parents, child, sibling)	50	15.8
Acquaintance	42	13.3
Other person, known to victim	37	11.7
Stranger	29	9.2
Friend	19	6.0
(ex) girlfriend, or (ex) boyfriend	19	6.0
Other family member (e.g., cousin, uncle, In-law, stepchild, etc.)	12	3.8
Others*	6	1.9
Relationship unknown	103	32.5
Total	317	100.0

*Note. Others include babysitter (e.g., child killed by babysitter), current/former work relationship (e.g., co-worker, employee).

Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Victims

The circumstance characteristics of victims are presented in Exhibit 11. Approximately, 5 percent (4.7%, n=15) of victims were diagnosed with a mental health problem and 1.6 percent (n=5) of homicide victims experienced recent depression. In addition, 1.6 percent (n=5) of victims were currently or had recently received treatment for a mental health or a substance abuse problem and another 2.5 percent (n=8) had received treatment at some point during their life. About 6.8 percent (n=22) of victims had an alcohol problem and 21.1 percent (n=68) of victims had some other addiction or substance abuse problem.

More than two in five (42.2%, n=136) victims had life stressors (e.g., physical fights, an argument, legal problems, physical health problem, job/financial problem) at the time of their death. About 30 percent (31.7%, n=102) of victims had relationship problems (e.g., intimate partner violence, family relationship problem, or other relationship problem), and about 10 percent (9.9%, n=32) of victims experienced previous exposure to violence (e.g., abuse or neglect).

In terms of crime and criminal activity, 22 percent (n=71) of homicides were precipitated by another serious crime (e.g., drug dealing, robbery), 12.7 percent (n=41) of homicides occurred during the course of another crime, 5.9 percent (n=19) of homicides were gang related, and 1.6 percent (n=5) were related to other crimes (e.g. stalking, prostitution, etc.).

In addition, about 16 percent (n=51) of homicides were related to trafficking a controlled substance (e.g., drug deal gone bad, drug market turf battle, theft of drugs or money from a dealer during a drug deal, etc.) or drug habit (e.g., addict committing robbery to obtain money for drugs, arguments over drugs). About 9 percent (n=30) of victims used a weapon, and 6.5 percent (n=21) of victims were killed by a random act of violence. Approximately 4 percent (4.3%, n=14) of homicides were related to justifiable self-defense, 2.5 percent (n=8) were related to jealousy, and 2.2 percent (n=7) victims were an intervener of the incident. About 4 percent (n=13) of homicides were related to such circumstances as a brawl, drive-by shooting, being a bystander, or a mercy killing.

Exhibit 11: Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Victims (n=322)

	Frequency	Percent
Mental health, Substance abuse, and other addiction		
Diagnosed mental health problem	15	4.7
Depressed mood	5	1.6
Mental health/substance abuse treatment	5	1.6
Ever treated for mental health or substance abuse problem	8	2.5
Alcohol Problem	22	6.8
Other addiction or substance abuse problem	68	21.1
Relationship and Life Stressors		
Life stressors (e.g., physical fights, argument, legal problems, physical health problem, job/financial problem, etc.)	136	42.2
Relationship problems (i.e., intimate partner violence, family relationship problem, or other relationship problem)	102	31.7
Previous exposure to violence (i.e., abuse or neglect)	32	9.9
Crime and Criminal Activity		
Precipitated by another serious crime	71	22.0
Crime in progress	41	12.7
Gang related	19	5.9

Others (e.g., stalking, walk-by assault, prostitution or sex trafficking, etc.)	5	1.6
Manner Specific Circumstances		
Drug involvement	51	15.8
Victim used a weapon	30	9.3
Random violence	21	6.5
Justifiable self-defense	14	4.3
Jealousy (lover's triangle)	8	2.5
Victim was an intervener	7	2.2
Others (e.g., brawl, drive-by shooting, bystander, mercy killing, etc.)	13	4.0

Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Suspects

The suspect's circumstance characteristics are detailed in Exhibit 12. The analysis indicated that 20.5 percent (n=65) of suspects were indicated to have used a substance or alcohol at the time of the incident, 11 percent (n=35) of suspects attempted suicide after the incident, and about 10 percent (n=32) of suspects were also a victim in the incident. To clarify, suspects who were also a victim in the incident means that while the suspect ended up mortally wounding the victim, the suspect also suffered an injury in the incident. About 10 percent (9.8%, n=31) of suspects had been in contact with law enforcement. Twenty-five suspects were identified by the police as being mentally ill or had a developmental disability (7.9%). Additionally, 6.3 percent (n=20) of suspects were a caregiver for the victim, 6.3 percent (n=20) had a history of abusing the victim, and 4.7 percent (n=15) were recently released from institutions including jail, prison, detention facility, hospital, and treatment facility.

Exhibit 12: Suspect's characteristics (n=317)

	Frequency	Percent
Suspected substance or alcohol use by suspect	65	20.5
Suspect attempted suicide after incident	35	11.0
Suspect is also a victim in the incident	32	10.1
Suspect had been in contact with law enforcement	31	9.8
Suspect mentally ill or had developmental disability	25	7.9
Suspect was a caregiver for the victim	20	6.3
History of abuse of victim by the suspect	20	6.3
Suspect was recently released from an institution (e.g., jail, prison, detention facility, hospital, treatment facility, etc.)	15	4.7

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

Homicide is the most serious form of violence in any community. The purpose of this report is to provide a general description of the scope and nature of the homicide problem in Arizona. This report relies on data provided through death certificates, law enforcement and medical examiner reports, and thus, details principally rely upon officially collected and reported information. Our major findings were as follows:

- In 2015, there were a total of 322 homicide victims in Arizona. There were 279 victims of single homicide (86.6%), 32 victims of homicide followed by the suicide of the perpetrator (9.9%), and 11 victims of multiple homicide (3.4%, see Exhibit 1).
- Homicides were largely concentrated in Maricopa and Pima counties, which are the two population centers of the state. These two counties accounted for about 78 percent of the homicides in the state.
- Most Arizona homicide victims were injured in a house or apartment (52.5%). In addition, a firearm was the most common weapon used for homicide in Arizona (67.5%).
- The majority of victims and suspects involved in homicide were males, white, and were between the ages of 15 and 34. In addition, most of victims were never married (61.8%), had a high school degree or less (72.3%), and were known to be born in U.S. (88.2%).²
- Most homicide victims knew the suspects involved, with only 9.2 percent (n=29) attributed to strangers, and an additional 32.5 percent (n=103) of homicides with an unidentified suspect, or an undocumented relationship between victim and suspect.
- Risk for homicide was particularly concentrated among Hispanic, Native American, and Black males, aged 15 to 34 years old. While Arizona's homicide rate was 4.7 per 100,000 population in 2015, it was 14.3 per 100,000 for Hispanic males, aged 15 to 34; 26.7 per 100,000 for Native American males, aged 15 to 34; and was 67.2 per 100,000 for Black males, aged 15 to 34.
- Current life stressors, including, but not necessarily limited to physical fights, argument, legal problems, physical health problem, job and financial problems, were frequent among homicide victims (42.2%, n=136).
- At the time of their death, 31.7 percent (n=102) of victims were having relationship problems.
- About 22 percent (n=71) of homicides were precipitated by another serious crime, and another 12.7 percent (n=41) were committed while another crime was in progress. Related, about 16 percent (n=51) of homicides were related to illegal drugs.

² About 8.4% of victims were known to be foreign-born and the national origin of 3.4% of victims was unknown.

- About 11 percent (n=35) of suspects attempted suicide after the incident.
- Almost 8 percent (n=25) of suspects were mentally ill or had a developmental disability.
- Additionally, 6.3 percent (n=20) of suspects were the caregiver for the victim, and 6.3 percent (n=20) had a history of abusing the victim.

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