

Arizona Violent Death Reporting System: Annual Report on Homicide 2015



By the

Center for Violence Prevention & Community Safety

Arizona State University

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Table of Contents

About the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
FINDINGS.....	2
Homicides in Arizona, 2015	2
Homicide Rate by County.....	3
Homicides by Month.....	4
Incident Characteristics.....	5
Location Where the Homicide Occurred	6
Weapon Used.....	7
Firearm Type	8
Victim and Suspect Demographic Characteristics	9
Marital Status, Education and Birth Place	11
Cumulative Risk for Homicide	12
Victim/Suspect Relationship	13
Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Victims.....	14
Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Suspects	16
Toxicology Results of Homicide Victims.....	17
CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY	18
REFERENCES.....	20

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 whom 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 Watts Family 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, analyzes and 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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Apache County Medical Examiner's Office
Coconino County Medical Examiner's Office
Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office
Mohave County Medical Examiner's Office
Navajo County Medical Examiner's Office
Pima County Medical Examiner's Office
Pinal County Medical Examiner's Office
Yavapai County Medical Examiner's Office
Yuma County Medical Examiner's Office

Apache Junction Police Department
Avondale Police Department
Buckeye Police Department
Casa Grande Police Department
Chandler Police Department
Chino Valley Police Department
Douglas Police Department
El Mirage Police Department
Flagstaff Police Department
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Sedona Police Department
Show Low Police Department
Sierra Vista Police Department
St. Johns Police Department
Surprise Police Department
Tempe Police Department
Tucson Police Department

Coconino County Sheriff Office
Maricopa County Sheriff Office
Pima County Sheriff Office
Yuma County Sheriff Office

ADHS, Bureau of Vital Records

The AZ-VDRS is fortunate to have a hardworking and dedicated staff. Program Manager David Choate managed the day-to-day operations of the project and is chiefly responsible for data quality and program integrity. Data abstractors Melissa Gutierrez, Danielle Falcone, Mercedes Chavez, Jonathan Hernandez, and a team of student interns engage in abstracting the material that makes this project possible.

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.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from the Arizona Violent Death Reporting System (AZ-VDRS) 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.

The Arizona Violent Death Reporting System (AZ-VDRS) serves as a site within the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS). The 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 2015, 42 states, including Arizona, are participating in NVDRS. The primary goal of NVDRS is to provide high quality data useful for the 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 such as mental health problems, recent problems with a job, finances, or relationships, and physical health problems.

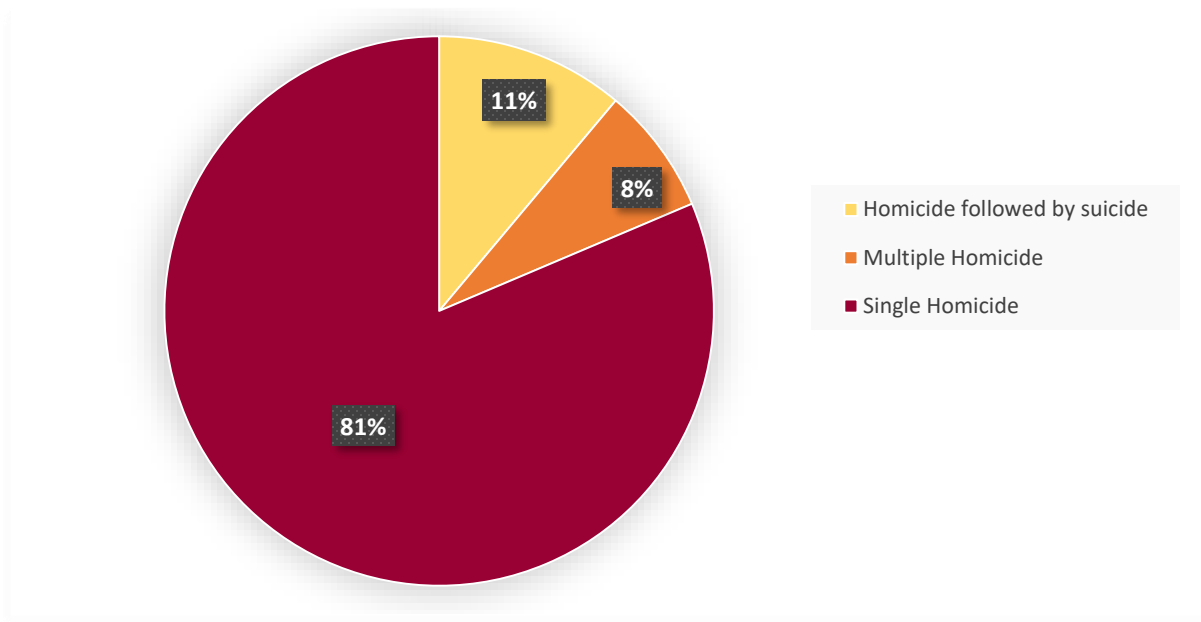
This report used data gathered on all decedents in the AZ-VDRS database who were victims of homicide during the period January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015. Deaths from legal intervention, which refers to a subtype of homicide where the victim is killed by or died as a result of law enforcement 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 and 5-Year Estimates.

FINDINGS

Homicides in Arizona, 2015

In 2015, there were a total of 331 homicide victims in Arizona. There were 269 victims of single homicide (81.3%), 37 victims of homicide followed by the suicide of the perpetrator (11.2%), and 25 victims of multiple homicide (7.6%, see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: Homicides in Arizona by Type, 2015 (n=331)

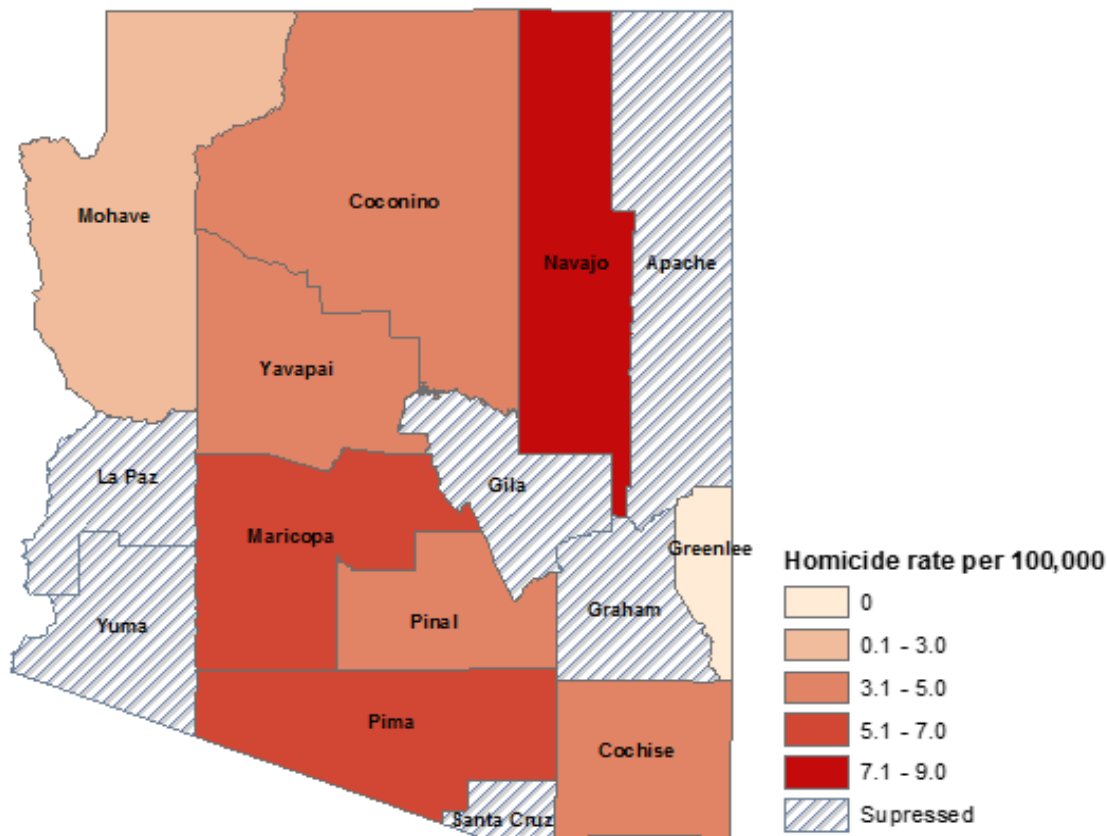


Homicide Rate by County

The Arizona statewide homicide rate was 4.9 per 100,000 population, which is the same as 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, 63.4% (n=210) of the homicides occurred in Maricopa County, 13.9% (n=46) in Pima county, and 22.7% (n=75) occurred in counties throughout the rest of the state (see Exhibit 2).

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. The homicide rate in Navajo County was 9.3 per 100,000 population, compared with a rate of 7.3 in Coconino County and 5.2 per 100,000 in Maricopa 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 1.2% (n= 4) of the total homicides occurred in an unknown location.

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



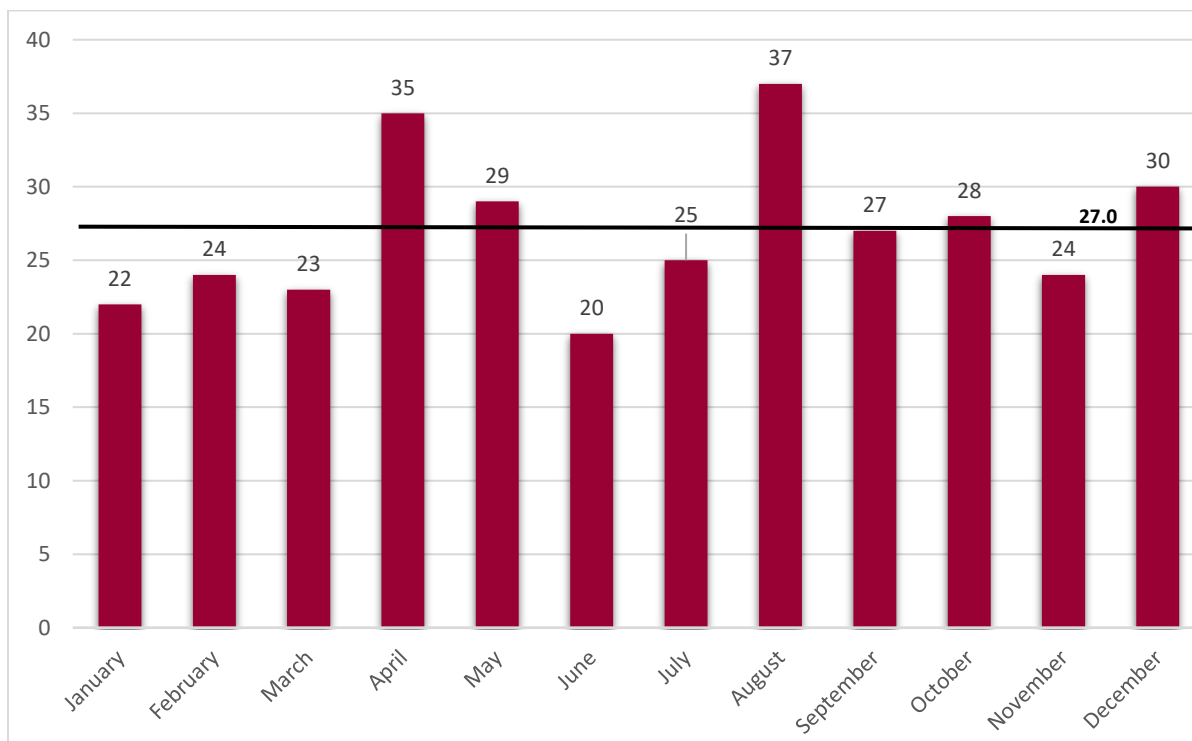
*Note: Findings are suppressed for counties that have fewer than five homicides or have a population of less than 100,000 (see legend above).

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

Homicides by Month

We also examined temporal patterns among Arizona homicides by month (see Exhibit 3). There was a low of 20 homicides in June, closely followed by 22 in January, to a maximum of 37 in August and 35 in April. Overall, there was a mean of 27.0 (SD=5.13) homicides per month, which puts both August (n=37) and April (n=35) at a statistically higher than expected homicide rate.

Exhibit 3: Number of Homicides by Month, 2015 (n=324)*

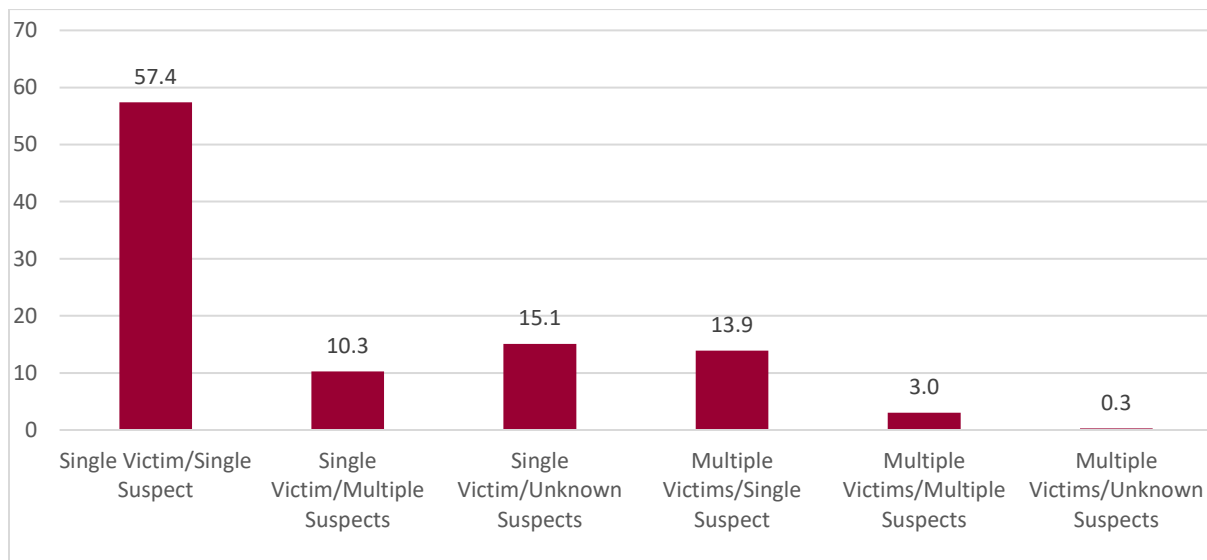


*Note: There were 7 homicides with an unknown death date.

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. First, the analysis (see Exhibit 4) shows that the majority of the homicides (n=190; 57.4%) were classified as Single Victim/Single Suspect. The overall percentage of single-victim homicide incidents was 82.8% (n=274). In addition, about 71 percent of homicides involved only one suspect (n=236), 13.3 percent of homicides involved multiple suspects (n=44), and there was an unknown number of suspects in 15.4 percent of incidents (n=51).

Exhibit 4: Number of Victims and Suspects per Homicide Event (n=331)



Location Where the Homicide Occurred

Exhibit 5 presents findings on the location where the homicide occurred (see Exhibit 5). About 53.5 percent (n=177) of homicide victims were injured in a house or apartment, and, of these, 73.5 percent (n=130; 39.3% of all victims) were injured in their own home. About 19.7 percent (n=65) of victims were injured in a street, alley, highway or parking lot. Cumulatively, 6.0 percent (n=20) of victims were injured in outdoor areas such as parks, fields and other natural areas. Approximately, 10.3 percent (n=34) of victims were injured at an unknown injury location.

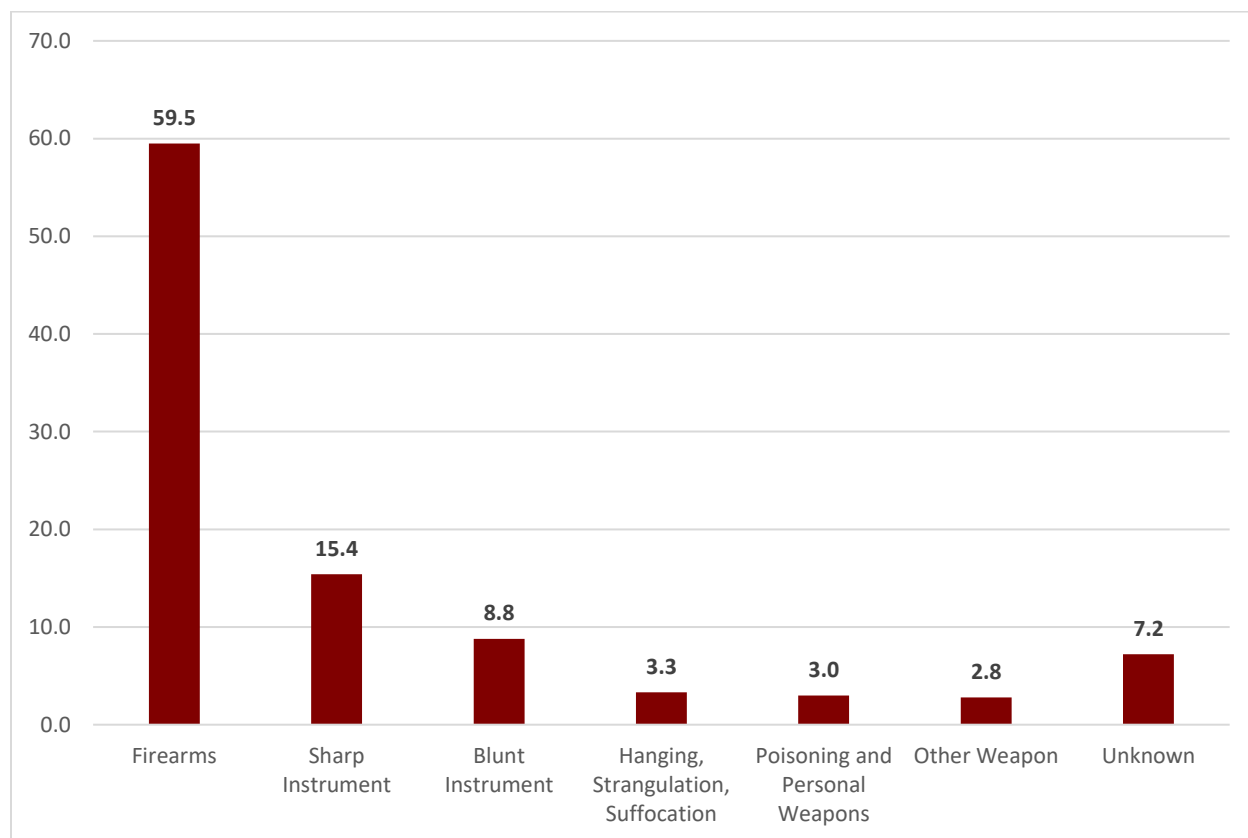
Exhibit 5: Location Type of Injury Incident, per Homicide Victim (n = 331)

	Frequency	Percent
House, apartment	177	53.5
At victim's home	130	39.3
Not at victim's home	41	12.4
Unknown home	6	1.8
Street/road, sidewalk, alley, highway, freeway	40	12.1
Parking lot/public parking garage	25	7.6
Natural area (e.g., field, river, beaches, woods)	14	4.2
Jail, prison, detention facility	7	2.1
Bar, nightclub	6	1.8
Park, playground, public use area, and commercial establishment (e.g., grocery store, retail outlet, etc.)	6	1.8
Motor vehicle (excluding school bus and public transportation)	5	1.5
Other (e.g., Hospital or medical facility, hotel/motel, office building, public transportation or station, service station, farm, etc.)	17	5.1
Unknown	34	10.3
Total	331	100.0

Weapon Used

Exhibit 6 shows the type of weapon used in Arizona homicides. A firearm was used in 59.5 percent of homicides, followed by sharp instrument (15.4%), blunt instrument (8.8%), hanging, strangulation, suffocation (3.3%), poisoning and personal weapons (3.0%), or drowning (2.8%). The weapon used was unknown in 7.2% of homicides.

Exhibit 6: Weapon Type Used in Arizona Homicide (n=331)

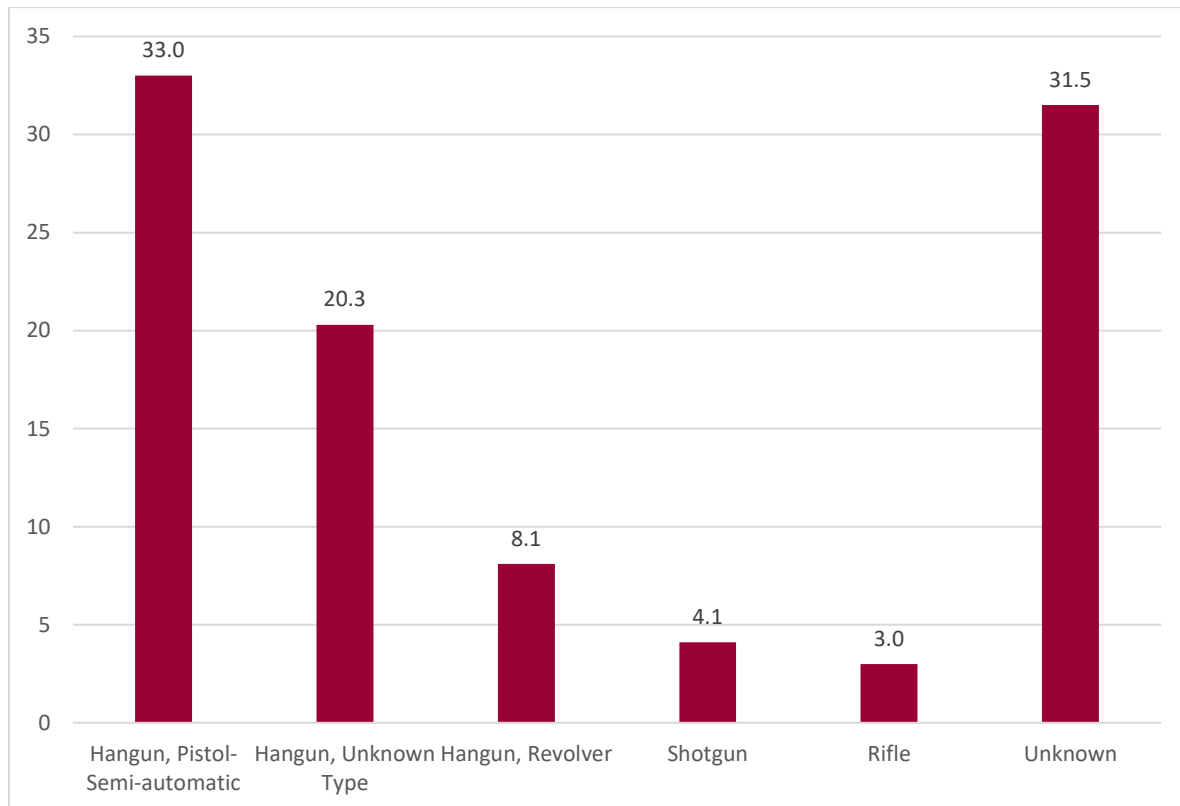


*Note. Personal weapons include fists, feet, and hands in actions such as punching, kicking or hitting

Firearm Type

Exhibit 7 shows the type of firearm used per incident in Arizona homicides. A semi-automatic pistol/handgun was used in 33.0 percent of homicides, followed by unknown type of handguns (20.3%), revolvers (8.1%), shotguns (4.1%), and rifles (3.0%). The type of firearm used was unknown in 31.5 percent of incidents.

Exhibit 7: Homicide by Firearm Type (n=197)



Victim and Suspect Demographic Characteristics

Exhibits 8a shows the characteristics of victims and suspects involved in Arizona homicides. The majority of victims and suspects involved in homicide were male. Specifically, 75.8 percent (n=251) of homicide victims were male and 66.8 percent (n=197) of suspects were male. With respect to age, victims and suspects were most likely to be between the age of 15 and 34.

Whites were most frequently involved in a homicide when compared to other racial groups. About 66 percent (n=217) of victims were White, followed by 17.2 percent (n=57) who were Black, 10.0 percent (n=33) who were American Indian, 2.1 percent (n=7) who were Asian, and 5.1 percent (n=17) were an unspecified race. Likewise, 35.6 percent (n=105) of suspects were White, 13.6 percent (n=40) were Black, and about 49 percent (n=144) of suspects were an unspecified race.

With regard to the victim and suspect's ethnicity, 32.3 percent (n=107) of victims and 17.3 percent (n=51) of suspects were identified as Hispanic. When accounting for the proportion among the general population, Blacks were a little more than four times more likely to be involved as victims (17.2% of homicide victims compared to 4.4% of the population) and a little more than three times as likely to be involved as suspects (13.6% and 4.4%) than the general population. Similarly, Native Americans were a little more than twice as likely to be homicide victims (10.0%), compared to their proportion of the general population (4.5%). See Exhibit 8a.

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

	Victims (n = 331)		Suspects (n = 295)		General population (n = 6,828,065)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Gender</i>						
Male	251	75.8	197	66.8	3,387,385	49.6
Female	80	24.2	26	8.8	3,440,680	50.4
Unknown	0	0.0	72	24.4		
<i>Age</i>						
0 – 14	18	5.4	NA	NA	1,346,069	19.7
15 – 24	78	23.6	55	18.6	945,042	13.8
25 – 34	94	28.4	51	17.3	914,761	13.4
35 – 44	52	15.7	23	7.8	845,274	12.4
45 – 54	47	14.2	23	7.8	842,972	12.3
55 – 64	22	6.6	5	1.7	813,943	11.9
65 – 74	11	3.3	NA	NA	652,858	9.6
75 +	8	2.4	NA	NA	467,146	6.8
Unknown/Missing	1	0.3	132	44.7	--	--
Mean (SD)	34.92	(16.68)	32.54	(14.54)	--	--
<i>Race</i>						
White	217	65.6	105	35.6	5,285,994	77.4
Black	57	17.2	40	13.6	300,685	4.4
Native American	33	10.0	NA	NA	308,469	4.5
Asian	7	2.1	NA	NA	217,556	3.2
Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	11,284	0.2
Multi-Race	NA	NA	NA	NA	222,446	3.3
Unspecified Race	17	5.1	144	48.8	--	--
<i>Ethnicity</i>						
Hispanic	107	32.3	51	17.3	2,098,411	30.7
Non-Hispanic	205	61.9	84	28.5	4,729,654	69.3
Unknown/Missing	19	5.7	160	54.3	--	--

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.

Marital Status, Education and Birth Place

Exhibit 8b examines the marital status, education, and birthplace of victims (see Exhibit 8b). About 61 percent (n=201) of victims were never married, 17.8 percent (n=59) were married, and 12.4 percent (n=41) were divorced at the time of the homicide. Few of the victims were found to be separated (2.7%, n=9) from their spouse or widowed (2.4%, n=8). In terms of educational attainment, 36.6 percent (n=121) of victims were high school graduates, followed by 36.0 percent (n=119) who had completed less than a high school degree or GED equivalency, 13.3 percent (n=44) who had obtained some college credit, and 9.9 percent (n=33) who had earned a college degree of some type. Our findings also indicated that the majority of homicide victims in Arizona were born in the United States. About 44.1 percent (n=146) of victims were born in Arizona, 43.8 percent (n=145) were born in other U.S. states, and just 8.8 percent (n=29) of victims were born outside the United States.

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

	Victims (n = 331)		General population (n = 6,828,065)	
	n	%	n	%
<i>Marital Status^a</i>				
Never married	201	60.7	1,837,146	33.5
Married/Civil Union/ Domestic Partnership	59	17.8	2,541,103	46.4
Divorced	41	12.4	93,804	1.7
Married, but separated	9	2.7	702,520	12.8
Widowed	8	2.4	307,423	5.6
Unknown/Missing	13	3.9		
<i>Education^b</i>				
< 8th grade	37	11.2	271,316	6.0
9th-12th grade	82	24.8	359,657	7.9
High School or GED	121	36.6	1,110,871	24.5
Some college credit	44	13.3	1,155,555	25.5
Associate	9	2.7	382,106	8.4
Bachelor	17	5.1	788,933	17.4
Master +	7	2.1	468,516	10.3
Unknown	14	4.2		
<i>Birth Place</i>				
Arizona	146	44.1	2,679,897	39.2
Other states	145	43.8	3,135,027	45.9
Other Countries	29	8.8	1,013,141	14.8
Unknown/Missing	11	3.3	--	--

Note. Population estimate sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 5-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 7.4, which is significantly higher than the overall homicide rate in Arizona of 4.9 per 100,000 population. Analyses described above found those aged 15 to 34 were the most common age groups 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 13.5, 24.8, and 69.0, respectively. Further, homicide rates for Hispanic males aged 15 to 34 were nearly triple, for Native Americans almost five times as high, and for Black victims about fourteen times greater than the overall statewide homicide rate (4.9 per 100,000 population).

Exhibit 9: Cumulative Risk for Homicide

Victim Characteristic(s)	# of Homicide Victims	Population	Homicide rate per 100,000
Male	251	3,387,385	7.4
Male, ages 15 to 34	140	957,239	14.6
Male, ages 15 to 34, Hispanic	49	364,154	13.5
Male, ages 15 to 34, Native American	13	52,437	24.8
Male, ages 15 to 34, Black	38	55,037	69.0

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 about 6.4 percent of victims were killed by a spouse (n=19), 4.1 percent (n=12) were killed by a current romantic partner, and another 2.4 percent (n=7) of victims were killed by a former spouse or romantic partner. Friends or acquaintances accounted for more than 17% (n=51), 11.5% (n=34) were killed by family members, and almost 15 percent (n=44) of victims were killed by other persons known to the victim. Collectively, 56.6% (n=166) of victims were killed by someone they knew.

Intimate partners are responsible for about 1 in 6 homicides. These homicides involve physical, sexual and/or psychological violence that occurred in the context of a current or former relationship, and an intimate partner is someone characterized by emotional connectedness, regular contact, ongoing physical contact and/or sexual behavior, and familiarity and knowledge about each other's lives (Breiding et al., 2015). These intimate partners can include current or former spouses, girlfriends or boyfriends, dating partners or sexual partners (Breiding et al., 2015). Based on this, about 12.9% of homicides in Arizona in 2015 involved intimate partners and can be categorized as intimate partner violence.

Exhibit 10: Victim/Suspect Relationship (n=295)

	# of suspects	%
Spouse	19	6.4
Current Romantic Partner	12	4.1
Former Romantic Partner or Spouse	7	2.4
Family members (e.g. parents, child, sibling, cousin)	34	11.5
Friend or Acquaintance	51	17.3
Other person, known to victim *	44	14.9
Stranger	27	9.2
Relationship unknown	101	34.2
Total	295	100.0

*Note. Others include such relationships as babysitter (e.g., child killed by babysitter), current/former work relationship rival gang member, roommate (not intimate partner), etc.

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Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Victims

The circumstance characteristics of victims are presented in Exhibit 11. Approximately, 5 percent (6.6%, n=22) of victims were diagnosed with a mental health problem or a recent depressed mood. In addition, 1.5 percent (n=5) of victims were currently or had recently received treatment for a mental health or a substance abuse problem and another 2.4 percent (n=8) had received treatment at some point during their life. About 7.3 percent (n=24) of victims had an alcohol problem and 20.8 percent (n=69) of victims had some other addiction or substance abuse problem.

More than two in five (44.4%, n=147) victims had life stressors (e.g., physical fights, an argument, legal problems, physical health problem, job/financial problem) at the time of their deaths. About 30 percent (31.4%, n=104) of victims had relationship problems (e.g., intimate partner violence, family relationship problem, or other relationship problem), and about 5 percent (4.5%, n=15) of victims experienced previous exposure to violence (e.g., abuse or neglect).

In terms of crime and criminal activity, 19.9 percent (n=66) of homicides were precipitated by another serious crime (e.g., drug dealing, robbery), 14.2 percent (n=47) of homicides occurred during the course of another crime, 6.6 percent (n=22) of homicides were gang related, and 2.1 percent (n=7) were related to other crimes (e.g. stalking, prostitution, etc.).

In addition, 16.3 percent (n=54) of homicides were related to drug involvement which includes 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 7 percent (n=24) of victims used a weapon, and 6.0 percent (n=20) of victims were killed by a random act of violence. Approximately 3 percent (3.3%, n=11) of homicides were related to justifiable self-defense, 3.0 percent (n=10) were related to jealousy, and 2.4 percent (n=8) victims were an intervener of the incident. About 5 percent (5.1%; n=17) 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=331)

	Frequency	Percent
Mental health, Substance abuse, and other addiction		
Diagnosed mental health problem	18	5.4
Depressed mood	NA	NA
Current Mental health/substance abuse treatment	5	1.5
History of Treatment for mental health or substance abuse problem	8	2.4
Alcohol Problem	24	7.3
Other substance abuse problem	69	20.8
Relationship and Life Stressors		
Life stressors (e.g., physical fights, argument, legal problems, physical health problem, job/financial problem, etc.)	147	44.4
Relationship problems (i.e., intimate partner violence, family relationship problem, or other relationship problem)	104	31.4
Previous exposure to violence (i.e., abuse or neglect)	15	4.5
Crime and Criminal Activity		
Precipitated by another serious crime	66	19.9
Crime in progress	47	14.2
Gang related	22	6.6
Others (e.g., stalking, walk-by assault, prostitution or sex trafficking, etc.)	7	2.1
Manner Specific Circumstances		
Drug involvement	54	16.3
Victim used a weapon	24	7.3
Random violence	20	6.0
Justifiable self-defense	11	3.3
Jealousy (lover's triangle)	10	3.0
Victim was an intervener	8	2.4
Others (e.g., brawl, drive-by shooting, bystander, mercy killing, etc.)	17	5.1

Circumstance Characteristics of Homicide Suspects

The suspect's circumstance characteristics are detailed in Exhibit 12. The analysis indicated that 20.3 percent (n=60) of suspects were indicated to have used a substance or alcohol at the time of the incident, 9.8 percent (n=29) of suspects attempted suicide after the incident, and about 9 percent (n=26) 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 (10.2%, n=30) of suspects had been in contact with law enforcement. Nineteen suspects were identified by the police as being mentally ill or had a developmental disability (6.4%). Additionally, 3.7 percent (n=11) of suspects were a caregiver for the victim, 6.8 percent (n=20) had a history of abusing the victim, or were recently released from institutions including jail, prison, detention facility, hospital, and treatment facility (5.1%, n=15).

Exhibit 12: Suspect's characteristics (n=295)

	Frequency	Percent
Suspected substance or alcohol use by suspect	60	20.3
Suspect attempted suicide after incident	29	9.8
Suspect is also a victim in the incident	26	8.8
Suspect had been in contact with law enforcement	30	10.2
Suspect mentally ill or had developmental disability	19	6.4
Suspect was a caregiver for the victim	11	3.7
History of abuse of victim by the suspect	20	6.8
Suspect was recently released from an institution (e.g., jail, prison, detention facility, hospital, treatment facility, etc.)	15	5.1

Toxicology Results of Homicide Victims

The toxicology results for homicide victims are detailed in Exhibit 13. Of the 331 homicide victims in 2015, 279 underwent toxicology testing and 193 (69.2%) tested positive for at least one drug. The results of the analysis indicated that of the 275 victims who were tested for alcohol, 35.6 percent (n=99) tested positive for alcohol at the time of their death. Additionally, of the 275 victims tested for amphetamine use at the time of death, 27.3 percent (n=75) tested positive. Of the 199 tested for antidepressants, only ten tested positive (5.0%). Of the 277 tested for cocaine use at the time of death, 11.6 percent (n=32) tested positive. About 30 percent (29.8%; n=25) of victims tested for marijuana tested positive, and, 13.1 percent (n=36) tested positive for opiates. Last, 274 victims were tested for other substances (i.e. carbon monoxide, barbiturates, and benzodiazepines) and 10.9 percent tested positive (n=30).

Exhibit 13: Toxicology Results of Homicide Victims by Drug (n=279)

	# Victims Tested (n=279)	# Victims testing positive (n=193)	% testing positive among the tested --
Alcohol	278	99	35.6
Amphetamine	275	75	27.3
Antidepressant	199	10	5.0
Cocaine	277	32	11.6
Marijuana	84	25	29.8
Opiates	275	36	13.1
Other substances*	274	30	10.9
Any	279	193	69.2

*Other substances include carbon monoxide, barbiturates, and benzodiazepines.

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 331 homicide victims in Arizona. There were 269 victims of single homicide (81.3%), 37 victims of homicide followed by the suicide of the perpetrator (11.2%), and 25 victims of multiple homicide (7.6%).
- Homicides were largely concentrated in Maricopa and Pima counties, which are the two population centers of the state. These two counties accounted for about 77 percent of the homicides in the state.
- Most Arizona homicide victims were injured in a house or apartment (53.5%). In addition, a firearm was the most common weapon used for homicide in Arizona (59.5%).
- The majority of victims and suspects involved in homicide were males, white, and were between the age of 15 and 34. In addition, most victims were never married (60.7%), had a high school degree or less (72.6%), and were known to be born in U.S. (87.9%).²
- 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 4.9 per 100,000 population in 2015, it was 13.5 per 100,000 for Hispanic males, aged 15 to 34; 24.8 per 100,000 for Native American males, aged 15 to 34; and is 69.0 per 100,000 for Black males, aged 15 to 34.
- Most homicide victims knew the suspects involved, with only 9.2% (n=27) attributed to strangers, and an additional 34.2% (n=101) of homicides with an unidentified suspect, or an undocumented relationship between victim and suspect.
- More than a quarter (28.1%, n=93) of victims had either alcohol or other substance abuse issues.
- 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 (44.4%, n=147).
- At the time of their death, 31.4% (n=104) of victims were having relationship problems.

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

- About 20 percent (n=66) of homicides were precipitated by another serious crime, and another 14.2% (n=47) were committed while another crime was in progress.
- Gang related circumstances was noted in 6.6% (n=22) homicides.
- About 16.3 percent (n=54) of homicides were related to illegal drugs.
- About one-fifth (20.3%, n=60) of homicide suspects were indicated to have used a substance or drank alcohol at the time of the incident.
- About 10 percent (n=29) of suspects attempted suicide after the incident.
- About 6 percent (n=19) of suspects were mentally ill or had a developmental disability.
- Additionally, 3.7% (n=11) of suspects were the caregiver for the victim and 6.8% (n=20) had a history of abusing the victim.
- Toxicology results showed that among the 279 homicide victims test, 35.6% tested positive for alcohol use at the time of death, 27.3% tested positive for amphetamines, 29.8% tested positive for marijuana, and 13.1% tested positive for opiates.

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