

Homicides in Wisconsin
1960-1990

Coordinated by:

Thomas G. Eversen
Stephen W. Grohmann

Contributions by:

James Patterson

March 1991

Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance
Statistical Analysis Center
222 State Street, Second Floor
Madison, Wisconsin 53702
608/266-3323

Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance - Statistical Analysis Center

The Statistical Analysis Center is a program of the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance. The Center collects, analyzes, interprets, and disseminates a variety of criminal and juvenile justice data in Wisconsin. It also provides technical assistance to local criminal justice agencies, provides state and local government with access to federal criminal justice statistical information, and promotes the development and improvement of criminal justice statistical systems in Wisconsin.

Acknowledgements

The Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance and Statistical Analysis Center wish to express appreciation to the contributors who provided the data for this report. The homicide data reflected in this report were provided by law enforcement agencies across Wisconsin. We greatly appreciate the assistance of the many Sheriffs, Police Chiefs, and other staff and enforcement personnel of all these agencies over the years, without whom this report would not be possible.

The coordinators of this report also wish to express appreciation to other staff of the Office of Justice Assistance who assisted in the preparation of data for this report: Dean Jefferson, Robert Rettammel, and Jessica Strand.

Homicides in Wisconsin 1960 - 1990 is a publication of the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, Statistical Analysis Center. This report was supported by Grant # 86-BJ-CX-K031, the Wisconsin Statistical Analysis Center Clearinghouse Project, from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs. This grant provided 100 percent federal funding of \$179,074 over four years for data and information Clearinghouse activities.

SUMMARY OF WISCONSIN HOMICIDES: 1960-1990

General Trends

- From 1960 to 1990, the number of homicides has increased by 337 percent. In the last ten years, the number of homicides increased 64 percent.
- The increase in the homicide rate has not been as great as the number of incidents, increasing 246 percent in the last thirty years and 52 percent in the last ten years.
- In 1989, Wisconsin's homicide rate of 3.6 per 100,000 residents ranked 39th among all the states. The overall national rate was 8.7 homicides per 100,000 residents.

Victims

- In 1990 the typical homicide victim was a 31 year old black male.
- The average victim age declined from 35 in 1984 to 31 in 1990.
- The percentage of black victims increased from 23 percent in 1984 to 55 percent in 1990.

Offenders

- In 1990 the average homicide offender was a 23 year old black male.
- The percentage of black offenders increased from 31 percent in 1984 to 60 percent in 1990.

Relationships

- The offender and victim were known to each other in about 80 percent of the cases since 1984.
- Over 90 percent of homicides since 1984 were *intra*racial.

Weapons and Circumstances

- The percentage of homicides involving a firearm increased during the last two years.
- Homicides were most likely to result from an argument.

Milwaukee

- Milwaukee's proportion of Wisconsin's homicides increased from 40 percent in 1984 to 70 percent in 1990.
- Victims of homicide in Milwaukee were more likely to be young, black, and male.
- The proportion of homicides with firearms increased during the past two years.

Table of Contents

	page
• BACKGROUND outlines the general purpose of the report and describes basic methodology.	1
• TRENDS displays the overall trend in homicides over the last 31 years.	2
• THE VICTIM outlines victim characteristics and describes the 'typical' homicide victims over the last seven years.	4
• THE OFFENDER outlines the characteristics of the <i>known</i> perpetrators over the last seven years.	8
• RELATIONSHIPS examines the relationship of homicide victims to offenders and examines homicides by race and sex.	10
• WEAPONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES examines the circumstances of homicides and weapon usage.	12
• MILWAUKEE TRENDS examines Milwaukee homicide patterns and contrasts Milwaukee homicides with those in the balance of the State.	14
• MILWAUKEE VICTIMS	15
• MILWAUKEE OFFENDERS	16
• MILWAUKEE RELATIONSHIPS	17
• MILWAUKEE WEAPONS	18
• CONCLUSION	19
• Appendix A: Homicides By County 1984–1990	20
• Appendix B: Weapons Used in Homicides	22
• Appendix C: Relationship of Victim to Offender	23
• Data Collection Form	24

This report presents general trends in homicides in the State of Wisconsin between 1960 and 1990. The most detailed analysis is of homicides during the last seven years, 1984–1990. These data include information about the characteristics of the victims and perpetrators of homicide.

DEFINITION: According to the Uniform Crime Reporting system, murder and nonnegligent manslaughter are the willful, nonnegligent killing of one human being by another. The classification of this offense, as for all other Crime Index Offenses, is based on police investigation as opposed to the determination of a court, medical examiner, coroner, jury or other judicial body. Not included in the count for this offense classification are deaths caused by negligence, suicide, or accident; justifiable homicides, which are the killing of felons by law enforcement officers in the line of duty or by private citizens during commission of the felony; and attempts to murder or assaults to murder, which are classified as aggravated assaults.

METHODOLOGY: The data for this report was tabulated from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system. Specifically, the more detailed information from the last seven years is from the Supplemental Homicide database of the Office of Justice Assistance - Statistical Analysis Center. Population data for calculating homicide rates was interpolated from projections by the Department of Administration. At the time of this preparation, 1990 homicide data were preliminary and could be subject to change when complete data are available.

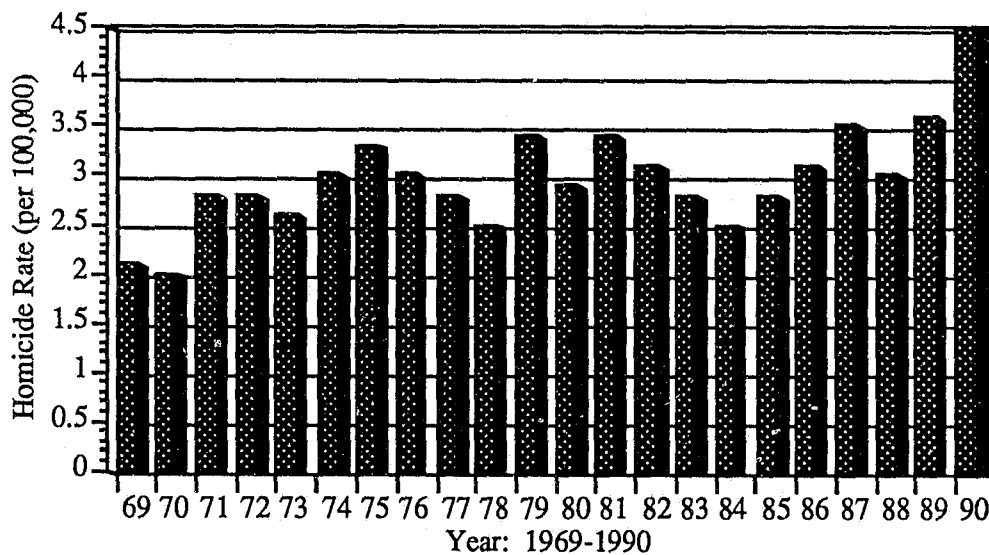
Trends

- In the last thirty years, the number of homicides increased 337 percent. The homicide rate per 100,000 population has increased 246 percent.
- In the last ten years, the number of homicides increased nearly 64 percent and the homicide rate has increased 52 percent.

Number of Homicides: 1960-1990



Homicide Rate: 1969-1990



CNC- _____

NCJ- 129886

Order no: _____
VF _____

Date Received

For Related Material, see NCJ #'s:

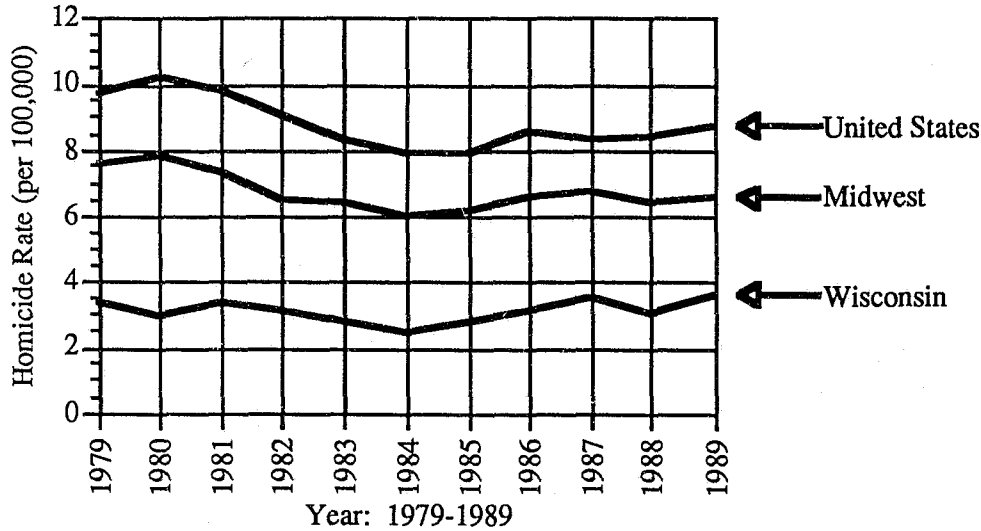
Notes:

Subject Screening: IN: OUT NUM-DOC By: 

Comments and Out Reasons

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AID | <input type="checkbox"/> CTS | <input type="checkbox"/> JUV |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CCP | <input type="checkbox"/> CJR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COR | <input type="checkbox"/> DAC | <input type="checkbox"/> VRC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

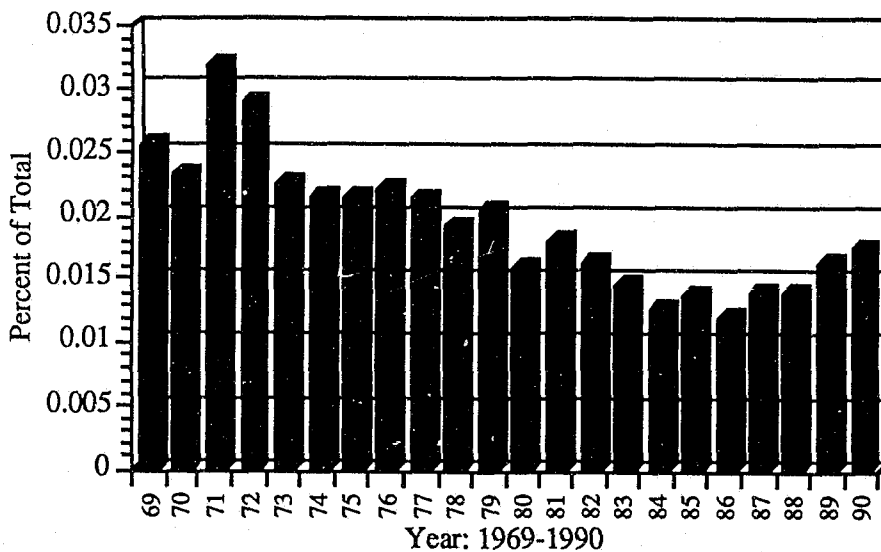
Homicide Rate by Region: 1979-1989



- Wisconsin's homicide rate is substantially below both the National rate and the rate for the Midwest (ND, SD, MI, WI, MN, IL, IO, MI, OH, IN, KS, NE).
- In 1989, Wisconsin's homicide rate ranked 39th in the Nation.
- 1989 Homicide Rates:

U.S.	8.7
Midwest	6.6
Wisconsin	3.6
- Wisconsin's 1990 homicide rate was 4.5.

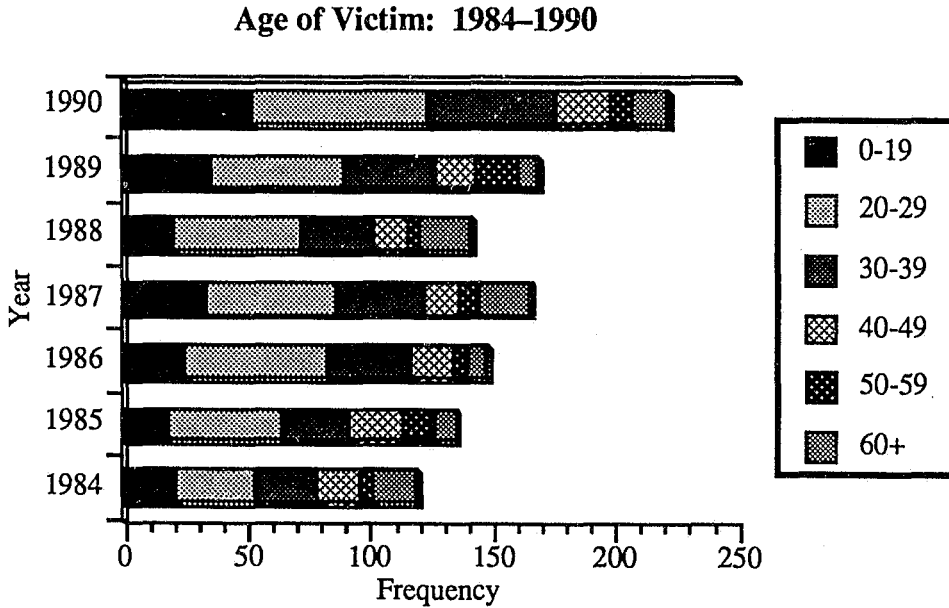
Homicide: Percent of Total Violent Crimes: 1969-1990



- In the last 20 years, homicide has *decreased* as a proportion of the violent crimes committed.
- However, in the last 5 years, homicide has *increased* slightly as a proportion of the violent crimes.

The Victim

The basic characteristics of the typical homicide victim are revealed in the following graphs. The typical victim in 1990 was a relatively young black male.



Note: In 1988, the age was unknown for two victims.

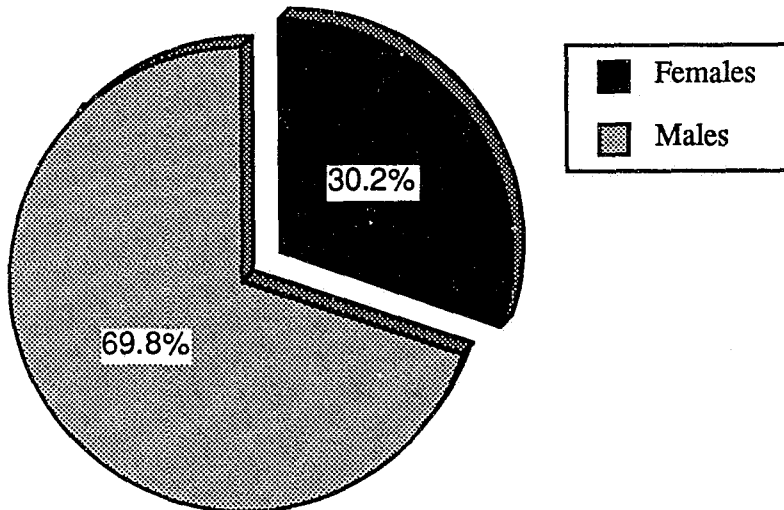
Average Age of Victim

<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
1990	31
1989	32
1988	35
1987	34
1986	31
1985	34
1984	35

The age distribution of the victim has been fairly stable over the last seven years, but decreased during the last two years.

- During this period, the oldest victim of homicide was 92.
- The youngest victims of homicide were less than one week old.
- The average age of the victim over the 1984-1990 period was 33 years.
- Age 20-29 is consistently the most frequent age group for homicide victims.

Sex of Victim: 1984-1990



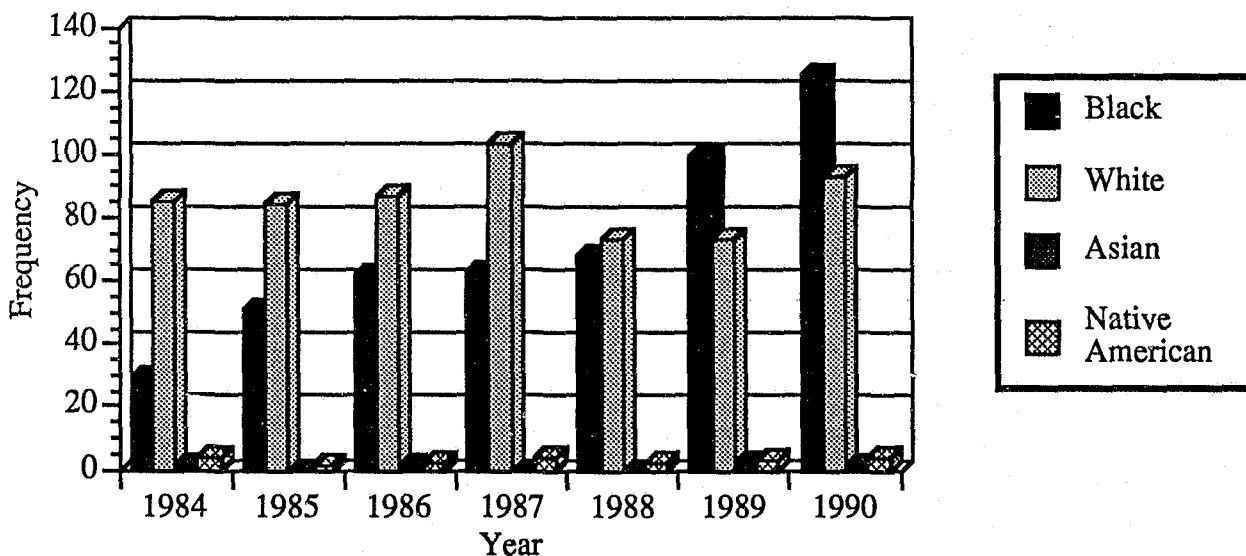
Over the last seven years, the breakdown of male and female victims has remained relatively unchanged.

- 69.8 percent are male.
- 30.2 percent are female.

The race of the victim has undergone considerable change in the last seven years:

- The percent of black victims has more than doubled (24% to 57%).
- The number of black victims more than quadrupled, from 28 to 125 from 1984 to 1990.
- The number of Asian and Native American victims has remained small.
- The number of white victims has decreased in 1988 and 1989, but rose again in 1990.

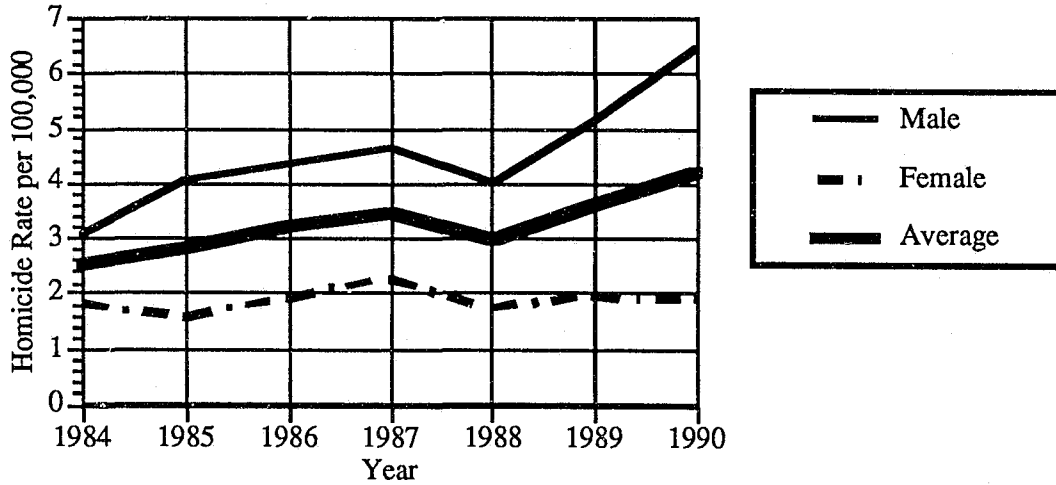
Race of Victim: 1984-1990



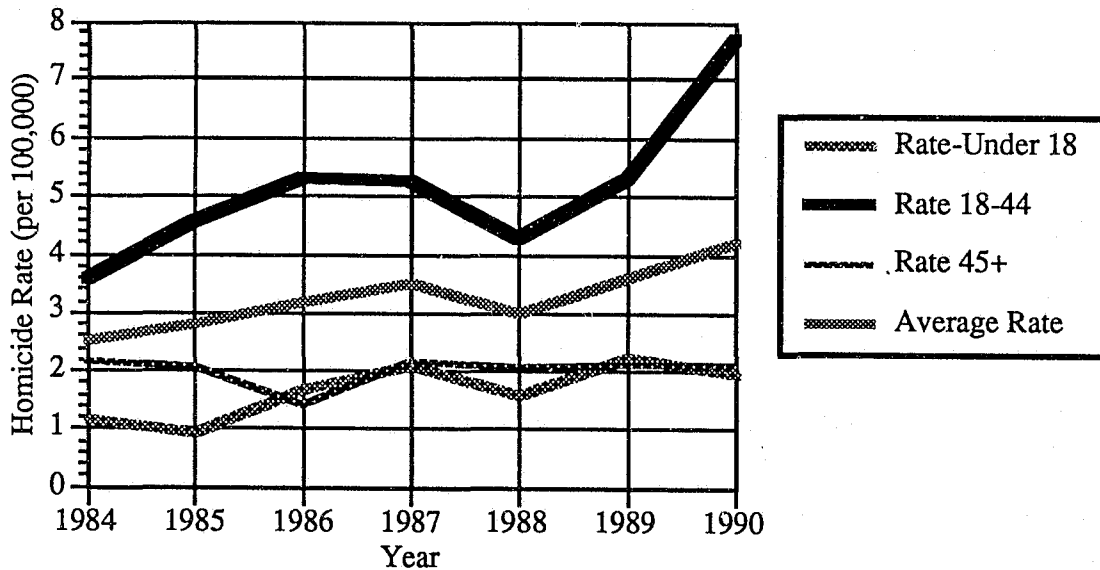
The Victim

The victimization rates for victims of different sex, age, and race categories illustrate the different risks for each of the cohorts. Young men (18-44 years) have the highest victimization rate. The victimization rate for young males increased sharply during 1989 and 1990. The victimization rate for blacks has increased steadily over the last seven years. In 1990 a black person was more than 10 times as likely to be a victim of a homicide as a white person.

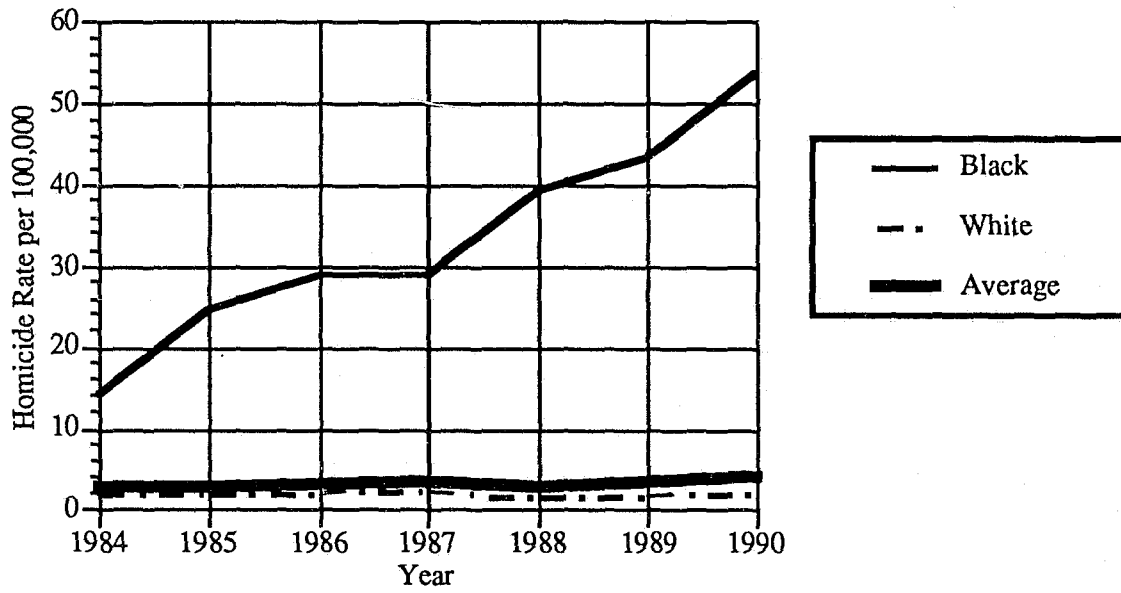
Homicide Rate by Sex: 1984-1990



Homicide Rate by Age: 1984-1990

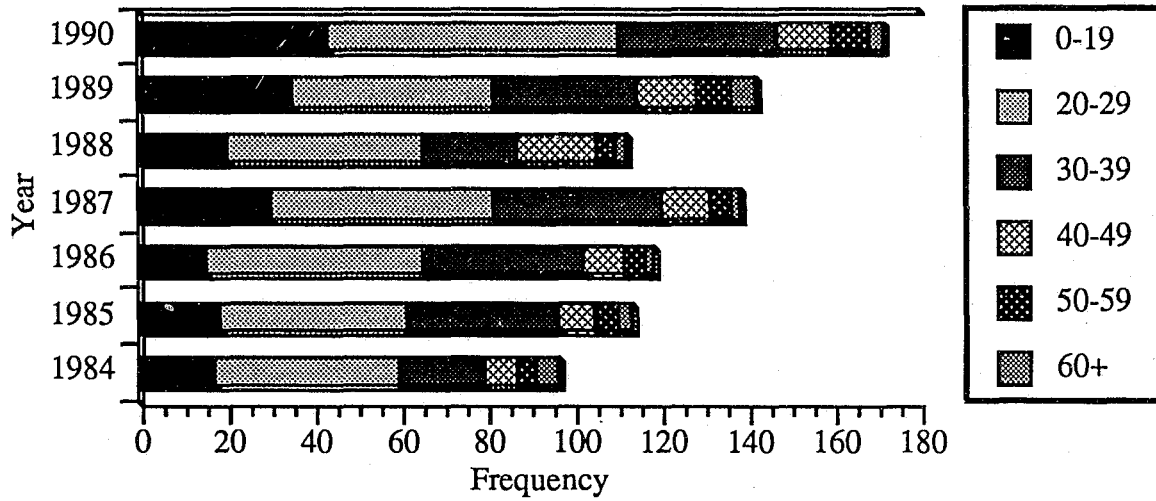


Homicide Rate by Race: 1984-1990



The Offender

Age of Known Offenders: 1984–1990



Average Age of Offenders

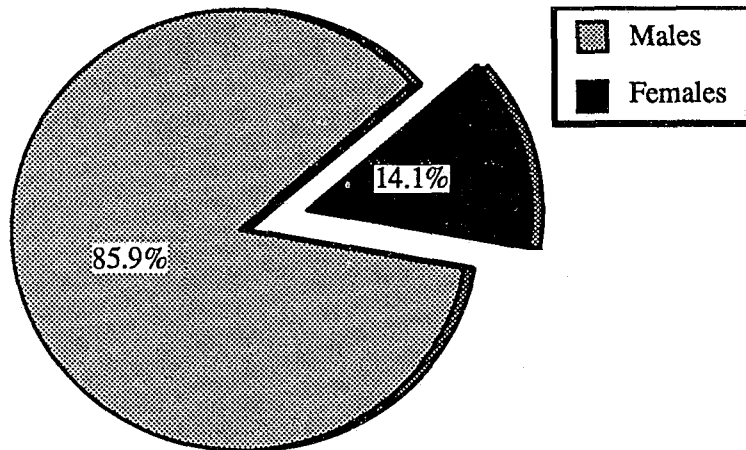
<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
1990	28
1989	30
1988	31
1987	29
1986	29
1985	30
1984	30

The typical age of the offender was slightly less than the age of the victim. The data for 1984–1990 show that:

- The oldest offender was 82.
- The youngest offender was 10.
- The average age of the offender was 30 years.
- The most frequent age group, like that of the victim, was 20 to 29 years.

Note: In approximately 20 percent of the cases, the age of the offender is unknown.

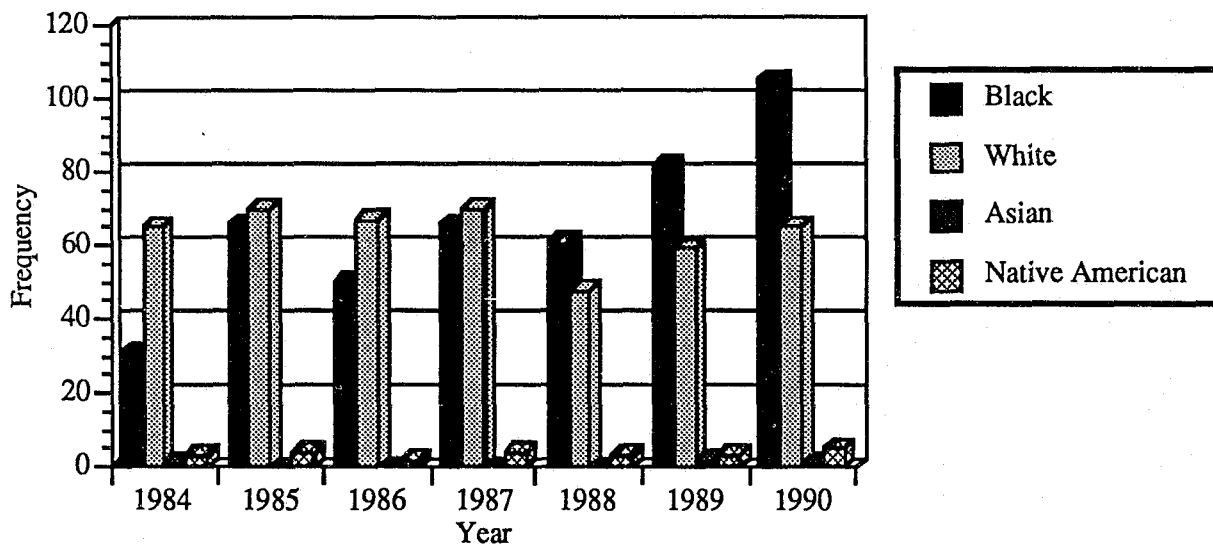
Sex of Known Offenders: 1984–1990



Considering only the sex of known offenders:

- 85.9 percent were male.
- 14.1 percent were female.

Race of Known Offenders: 1984–1990

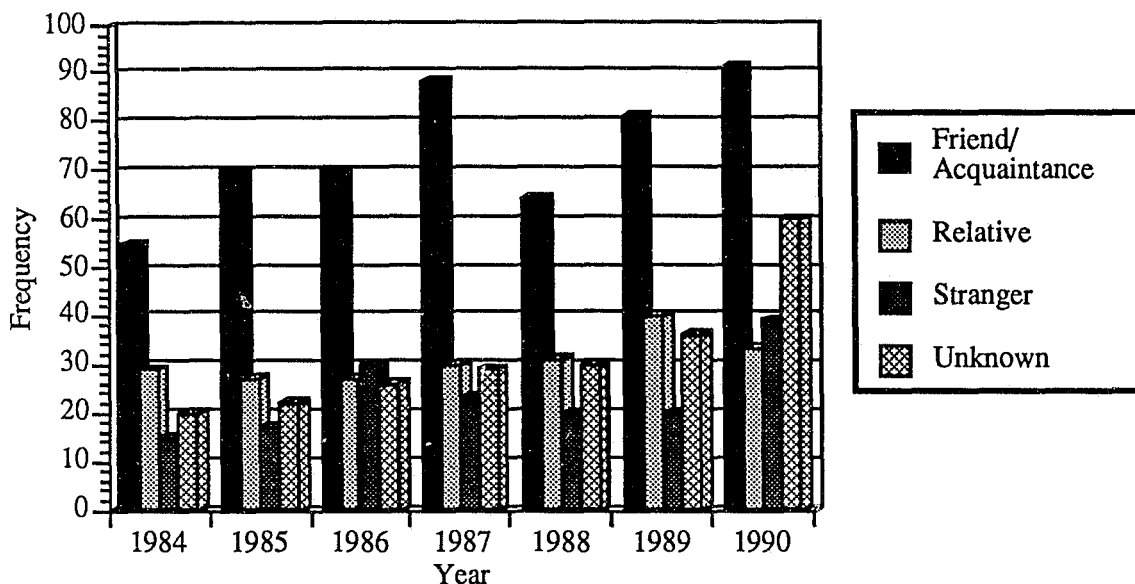


The racial breakdown of offenders when race was known (race was unknown in 18.5% of the cases) indicates:

- From 1984–1990, when race was known, the offender was black in 46.7 percent of the cases.
- The percent of black offenders increased from 31 percent in 1984 to 60 percent in 1990.
- Asians and Native Americans commit few homicides in the State.
- Except for 1988, the fluctuation in the number of homicides by white offenders has been minimal.
- Since 1988, the number of black homicide offenders has steadily increased.

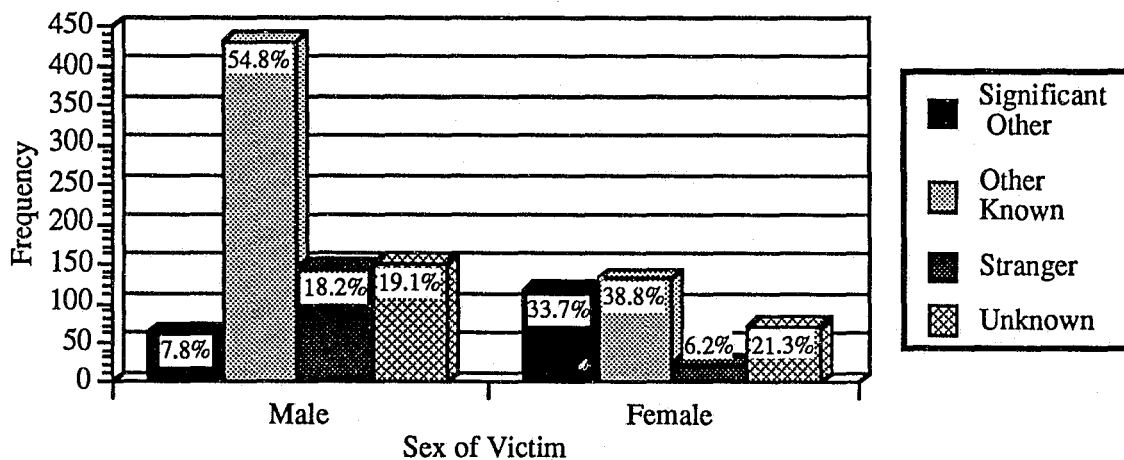
Relationships

Relationship of Offender to Victim 1984-1990



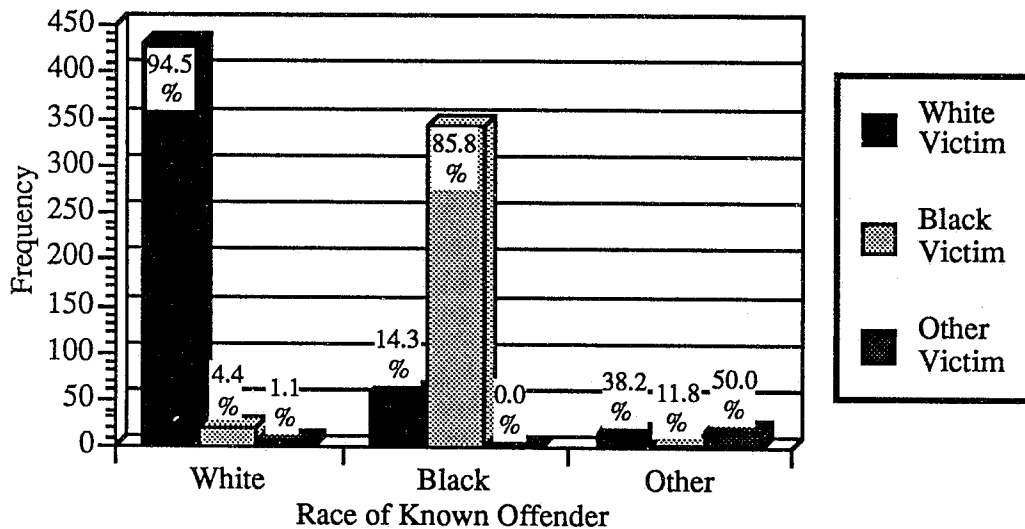
In most cases, the victim and offender in a homicide knew each other. The offender and victim were strangers to each other between 10 and 20 percent of the time (10.8% in 1990). Additional clearances for 1990 homicides will likely reveal more information about the relationships between victim and offender. (See Appendix C for actual relationship figures.)

Relationship of Offender to Victim by Sex of Victim: 1984-1990



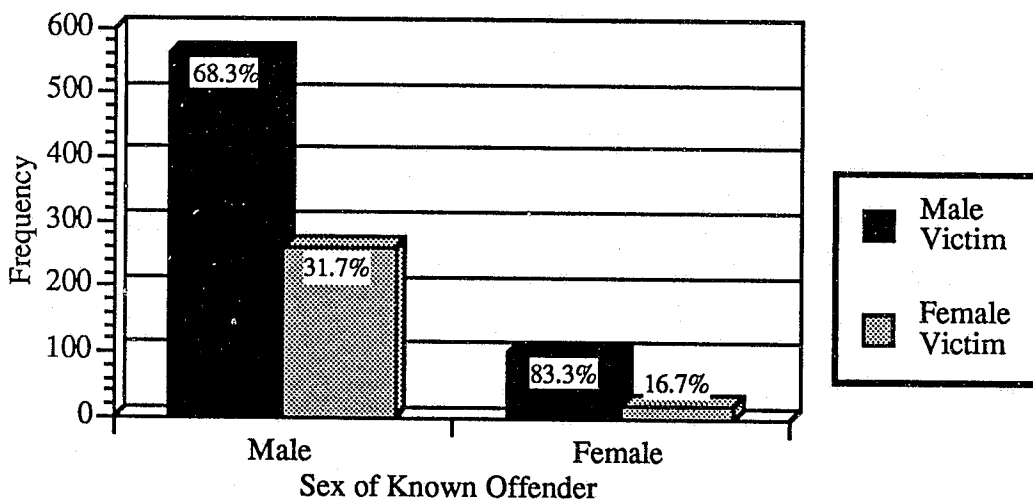
The data reveal that female victims were more likely to have had a "significant other" relationship (spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends and homosexual relationships) with the offender. Overall, female victims were more likely to have known the offender than male victims (72.5% for females and 62.6% for males).

Race of Known Offender by Race of Victim: 1984-1990



The data from 1984 to 1990 indicate that most homicides were *intraracial* (of the same race). Black offenders have a slightly higher tendency towards *interracial* (of a different race) homicide.

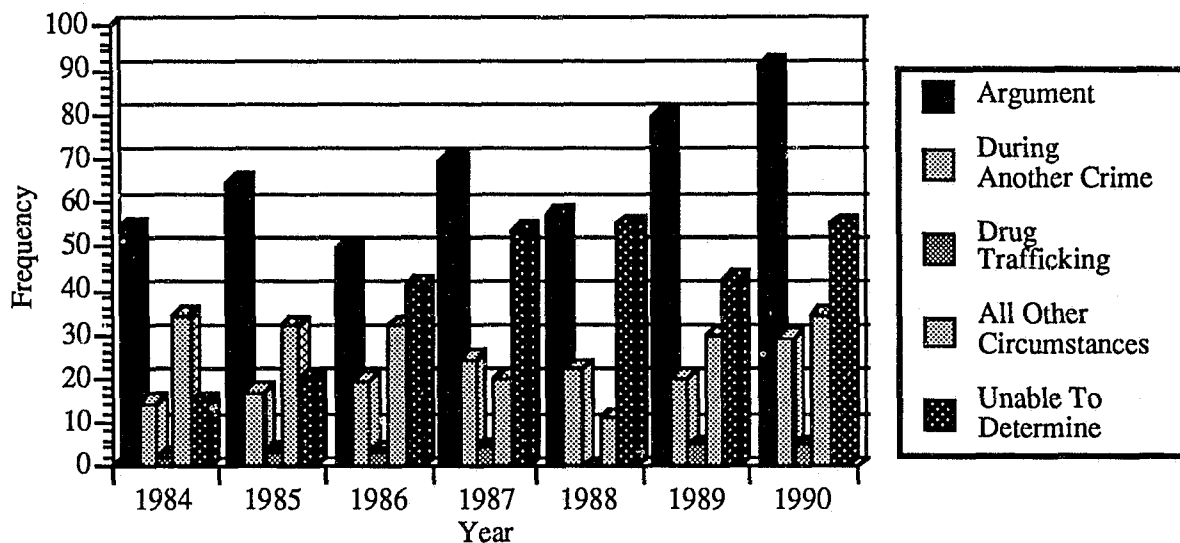
Sex of Known Offender by Sex of Victim: 1984-1990



An analysis of victim and offender reveals that both sexes were likely to kill males than females. However, a female offender was *more* likely to kill a man than was a male offender.

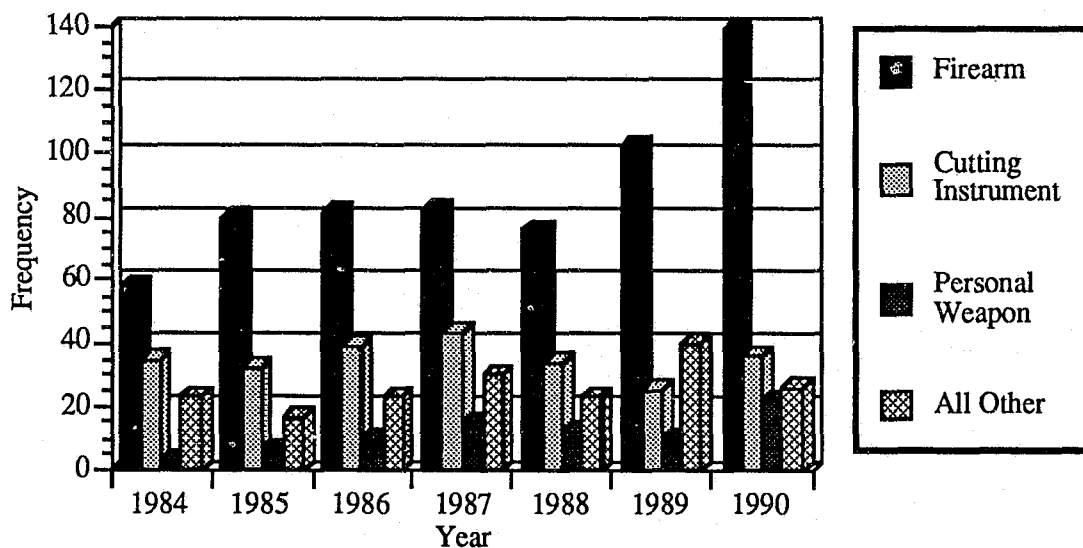
Weapons and Circumstances

Circumstances of Homicides: 1984-1990



The available classifications of the circumstances of homicides are fairly broad. According to the information provided, the most frequent circumstance of a homicide is an argument, although details of the argument are not available.

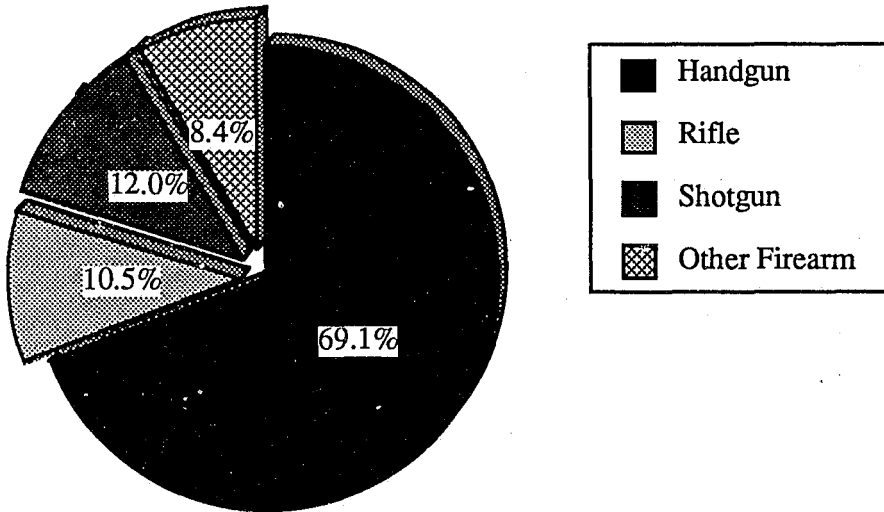
Type of Weapon Used: 1984-1990



Firearms are the preferred weapons of murderers (63% in 1990). Homicides involving a firearm increased notably during 1989 and 1990. The next most common type of weapons used were cutting instruments, which were used in 21.7 percent of homicides from 1984 to 1990. (See Appendix B for actual weapon use figures.)

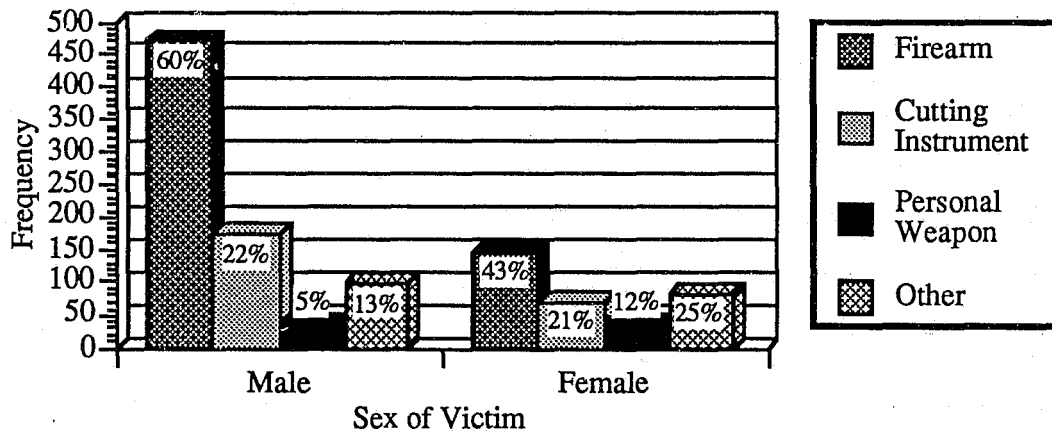
Weapons and Circumstances

Breakdown of Firearm Use: 1984-1990



Of the firearms used, handguns were the most common type of firearm. Handguns comprised 38.1 percent of *all* weapons used in homicides from 1984 to 1990 (see Appendix B).

Weapon Use by Sex: 1984-1990



The breakdown of weapon by victim sex reveals that firearms were used more frequently against male victims than female victims.

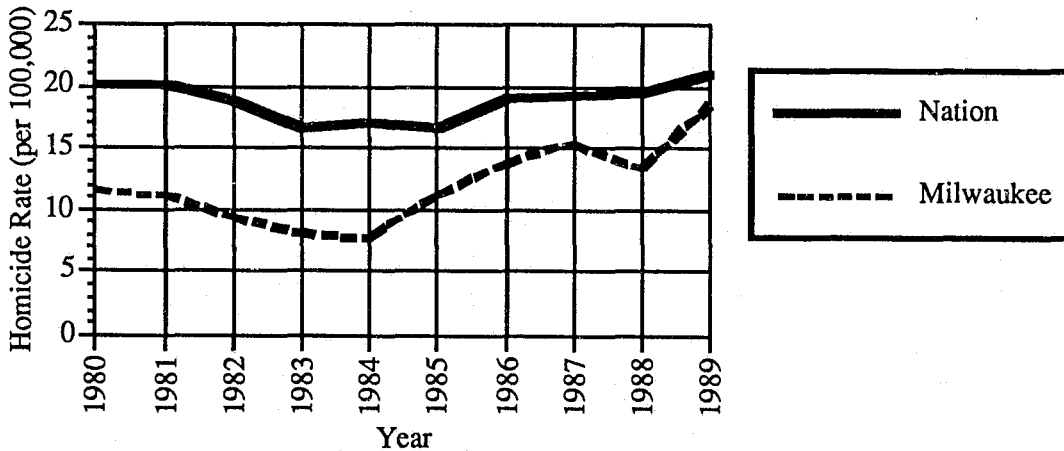
Milwaukee Trends

The City of Milwaukee has accounted for an increased proportion of the homicides in the State in recent years (up from 54% in 1980 to 70% in 1990). This section compares some of the trends in Milwaukee to the rest of the State.

Number of Homicides: State of Wisconsin, City of Milwaukee: 1980-1990

Year	State Total	City of Milwaukee Total	Milwaukee's Percent of the Total
1980	136	74	54%
1981	159	71	45%
1982	141	60	43%
1983	128	51	40%
1984	117	47	40%
1985	136	69	51%
1986	153	84	55%
1987	170	93	55%
1988	145	81	56%
1989	177	113	64%
1990	223	155	70%

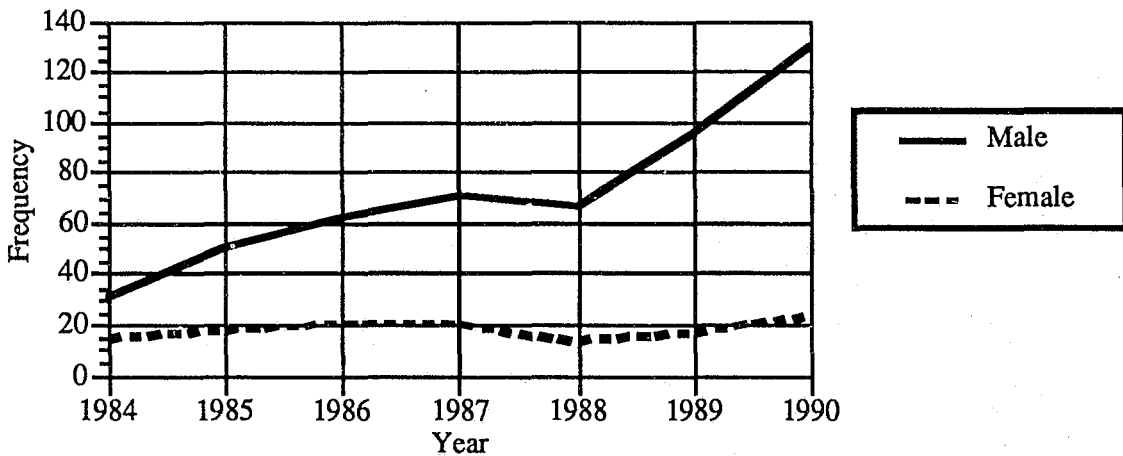
National Homicide Rate (for Cities 500,000 - 1,000,000) Compared to the City of Milwaukee: 1980-1989



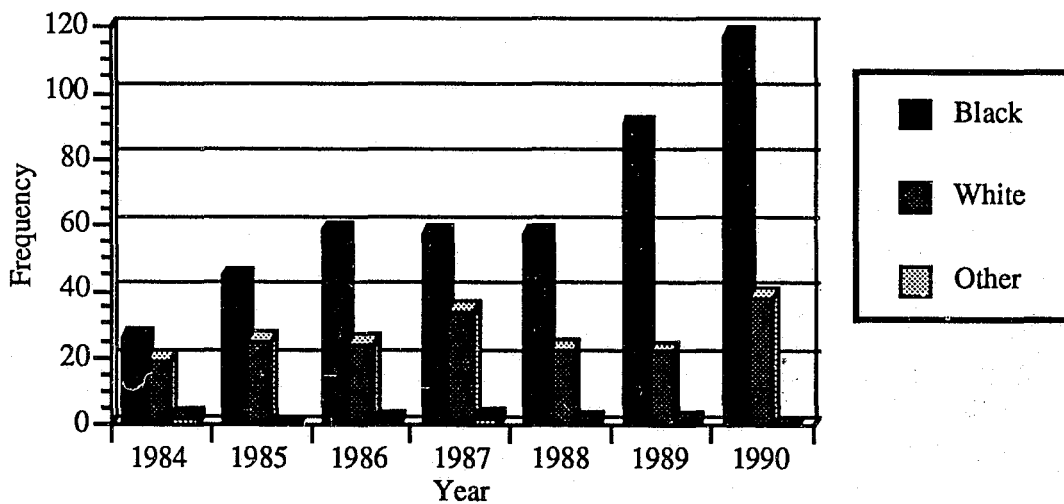
Compared to other cities of 500,000-1,000,000 population, Milwaukee's homicide rate has remained below the national rate. However, in the last few years, Milwaukee's rate has begun to approach the national average. In 1990, Milwaukee's homicide rate was 25.8.

Milwaukee Victims

Number of Homicide Victims by Sex in Milwaukee: 1984-1990



Homicide Victims by Race in Milwaukee: 1984-1990



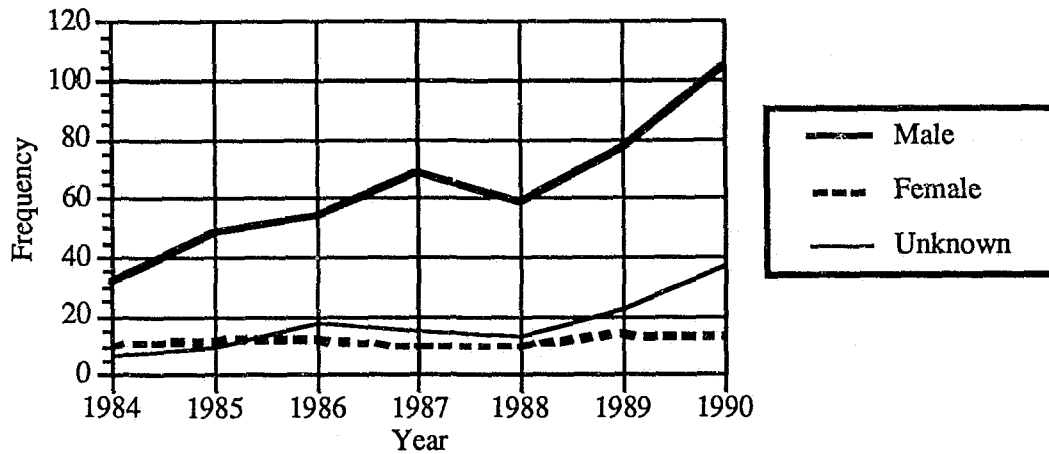
Average Age of Homicide Victims in Milwaukee: 1984-1990

Year	Average age
1984	32
1985	36
1986	30
1987	31
1988	31
1989	27
1990	29

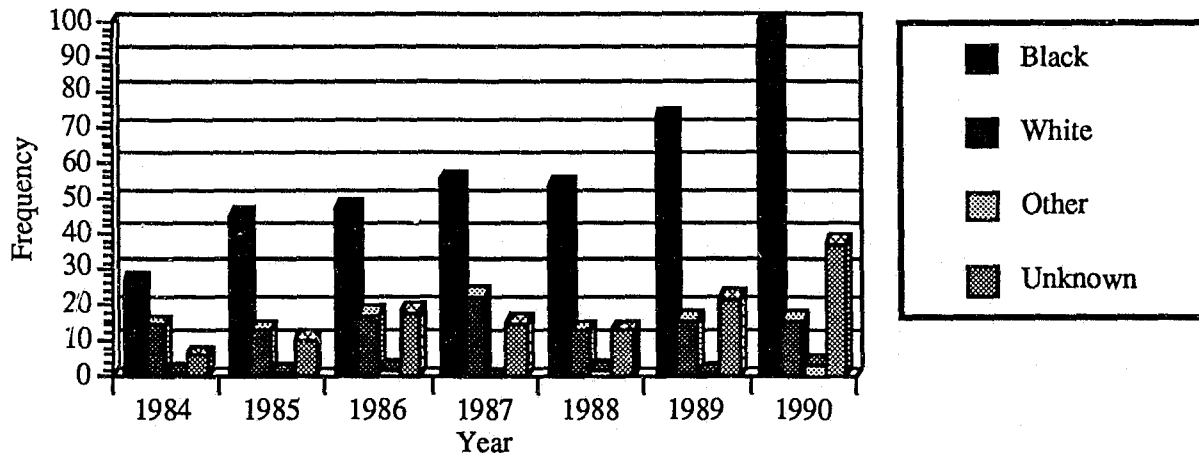
Based on 1984 to 1990 data, the victim profile for Milwaukee differed from the rest of the State. In Milwaukee, victims were predominately male (78.2%) and black (68.1%). Victims in the balance of the State were less frequently male (55.7%) and more frequently white (86.7%). The average age of victims in Milwaukee was nearly a year below the average for the rest of the State. The great disparity in the race of victims can be accounted for in part by population makeup.

Milwaukee Offenders

Homicide Offenders by Sex in Milwaukee: 1984-1990



Homicide Offenders by Race in Milwaukee: 1984-1990



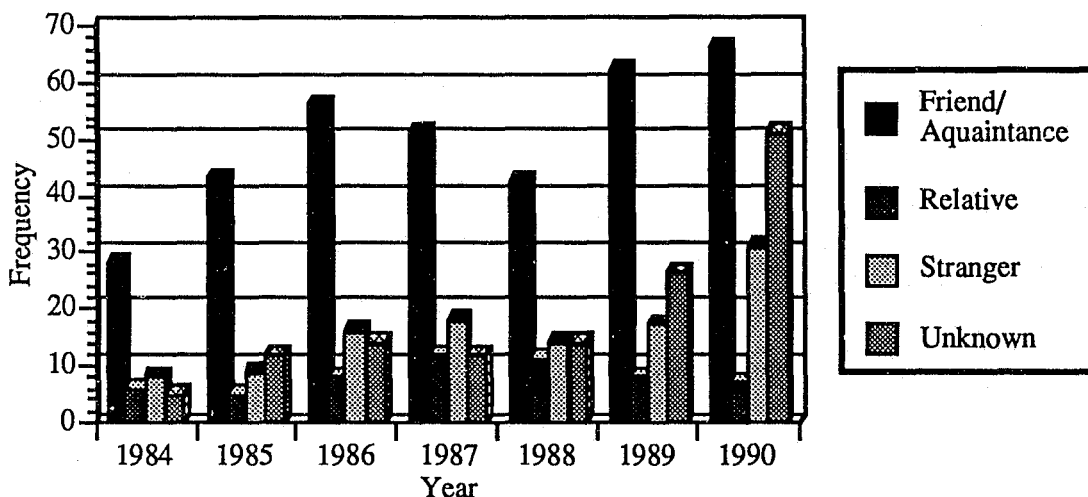
Average Age of Homicide Offenders in Milwaukee: 1984-1990

Year	Average Age
1984	29
1985	30
1986	29
1987	27
1988	31
1989	28
1990	27

For 1984-1990, the profile of offenders in Milwaukee generally parallels the offender profile for the rest of the State, except for race. When the sex of the offender was known, the offenders was over 80 percent male. The average age of the offender was less than one year below the average for the rest of the State. However, the race of the offender was predominately black (74%) in the City of Milwaukee, compared to the predominately white offender (83%) in the balance of the State. Like elsewhere in the State, most homicides in Milwaukee are intraracial.

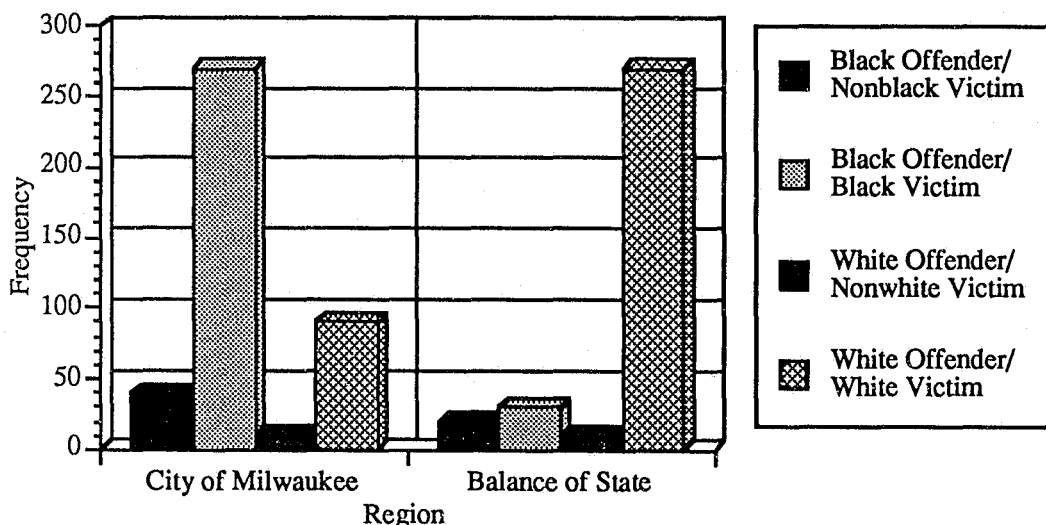
Milwaukee Relationships

Relationship of Offenders to Victims in Milwaukee: 1984-1990



In most Milwaukee cases, the offender was known to the victim. During the 1984-1990 period, however, the percentage of "stranger" homicides was six percent higher in the City of Milwaukee than in the remainder of State. The large portion of unknown relationships in 1990 may reflect the lag time for clearances (that is, as more cases are cleared, the relationships will be known.) (See Appendix C for actual relationship data.)

Interracial/Intracial Homicides: City of Milwaukee Compared to the Balance of the State: 1984-1990

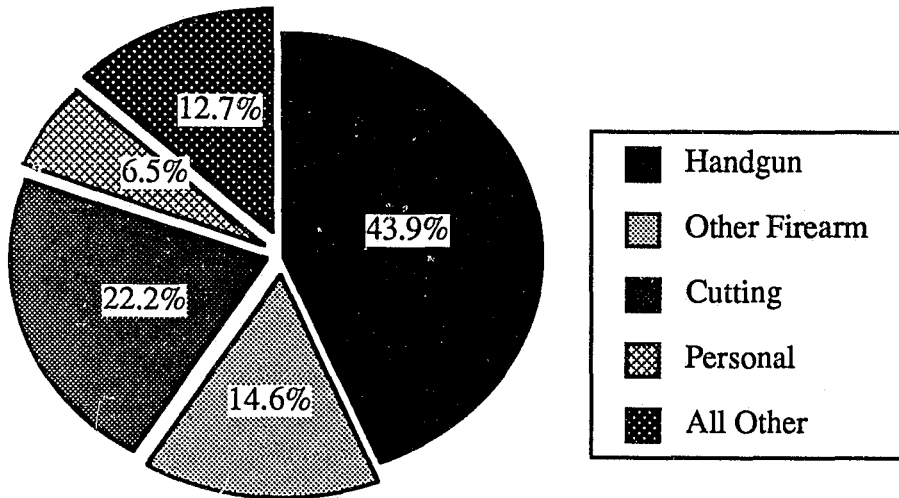


The pattern of interracial/intracial homicides differs between the City of Milwaukee and the balance of the State.

- In Milwaukee from 1984 to 1990, interracial homicides with black offenders were 11 percent of all black offender homicides, 10 percent of homicides with white offenders were interracial homicides.
- For the balance of the State, interracial homicides were 41.9 percent for black offenders and 2.2 percent for white offenders.

Milwaukee Weapons

Breakdown of Weapon Use for Milwaukee: 1984-1990



Weapon use in homicides in Milwaukee showed somewhat different patterns than the rest of the State. There was a higher instance of firearm use, and within that category, a higher instance of handgun use. In fact, over the last seven years, 44 percent of all Milwaukee homicides involved handguns, compared to 30 percent for the balance of the State. During only the last two years the difference is even greater, with almost 50 percent of Milwaukee homicides involving handguns and two-thirds involving firearms of all types. (See Appendix B for specific weapon use figures.)

While the number of homicides in Wisconsin has increased by 337 percent in the past thirty years, some of the most dramatic changes have occurred in the past two years. The total number of homicides has increased by nearly 54 percent in two years, from 145 in 1988 to an estimated 223 in 1990.

The major reason for the sharp increase in Wisconsin homicides in the past two years has been a dramatic increase in homicides in the City of Milwaukee. While homicides in Milwaukee have nearly doubled from 1988 (81 homicides) to 1990 (155 homicides), the number of homicides reported in the remainder of the State remained quite stable (64 in 1988, 64 in 1989, and 68 in 1990). As a result, the proportion of all Wisconsin homicides accounted for by the City of Milwaukee has increased from 56 percent in 1988 to 70 percent in 1990.

Since several characteristics of Milwaukee homicides are quite different from those in the rest of the State, overall patterns in Wisconsin homicides have changed in recent years, reflecting the preponderance of Milwaukee cases. For example, victims of Milwaukee homicides were more likely to have been young black males. Also, as shown in Appendix B, Milwaukee homicides were much more likely to have involved the use of firearms, particularly handguns.

Despite the dramatic increase in the number of Wisconsin homicides in recent years, this increase can be viewed in a national perspective. While the 1990 homicide rate per 100,000 residents was about 4.5 in Wisconsin, this figure is still about one-half that of the United States as a whole.

Appendix A

Homicides by County 1984-1990

<u>County</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	1984-1990 <u>Total</u>
Adams				1	1	1		3
Ashland			1				1	2
Barron	2*			1		1		4*
Bayfield				1		1	1	3
Brown	3	2	4	3	5	2	3	22
Buffalo		1						1
Burnett				1			1	2
Calumet							1	1
Chippewa	2		1		1	1	2	7
Clark	1							1
Columbia					3	2		5
Crawford		1						1
Dane	7*	5	6	6	7	12	5	48*
Dodge		1	1	1		1	2	6
Door		1	1	1			2	5
Douglas		1	1*	1*		1	1	5*
Dunn				1				1
Eau Claire			3	1				4
Florence	1							1
Fond du Lac	2	1			1		3	7
Forest						1		1
Grant		2		1			1	4
Green		1	2					3
Green Lake								0
Iowa								0
Iron	2			1				3
Jackson				1	1	2		4
Jefferson	2		2	1	1	1		7
Juneau				1		1	3	5
Kenosha	12	6	6	4	4	6	5	43
Kewaunee				1			1	2
La Crosse	1	5	2	4	1			13
Lafayette		1						1
Langlade					1			1
Lincoln	1	1						2
Manitowoc			1		1	1	1	4
Marathon	3	2		6		1		12
Marinette				2	1		1	4
Marquette							1	1
Menominee				1		1		2

	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Total</u>
Milwaukee	44	71	89	95	85	118	158	660
Monroe	2	1	1			1	4	9
Oconto							1	1
Oneida	1					2	1	4
Outagamie	2	2	3	1	3			11
Ozaukee	2	2		1		1	1	7
Pepin								0
Pierce				2				2
Polk		4				1	1	6
Portage	1	1	1		1	1	1	6
Price		1			1		1	3
Racine	2	6	7	8	8	7	11	49
Richland		2*				1		3*
Rock	3	2	6	2	3	2	1	19
Rusk	2							2
St. Croix					1	1	1	3
Sauk	1		3	1	1			6
Sawyer	2							2
Shawano			2				1	3
Sheboygan	1	2			2		1	6
Taylor	2	2	2	1				7
Trempealeau					1	1		2
Vernon	2	1	1					4
Vilas	1		1	2		1	2	7
Walworth				2				2
Washburn			1		2			3
Washington	2	2	2	5	1		1	13
Waukesha	1	1	2	5	3	1		13
Waupaca		3			2		1	6
Waushara	1							1
Winnebago	4		1	2	3	2	1	13
Wood	2	2		2				6
State Total	117	136	153	170	145	177	223	1,121

*Estimates based upon partial data

Appendix B

Weapon Use in Homicides - Outside City of Milwaukee 1984-1990

	<u>84-88</u>		<u>89-90</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Handgun	108	30.9%	38	29.0%	146	30.4%
Other Firearm	72	20.6%	25	19.1%	97	20.2%
Cutting	81	23.2%	20	15.3%	101	21.0%
Blunt	27	7.7%	10	7.6%	37	7.7%
Personal	20	5.7%	16	12.2%	36	7.5%
<u>All Other</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>11.7%</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>16.8%</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>13.1%</u>
TOTAL	349	99.8%	131	100%	480	99.9%

Weapon Use - City of Milwaukee 1984-1990

	<u>84-88</u>		<u>89-90</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Handgun	149	39.8%	132	49.4%	281	43.8%
Other Firearm	48	12.8%	46	17.2%	94	14.6%
Cutting	102	27.3%	40	15.0%	142	22.1%
Blunt	13	3.5%	15	5.6%	28	4.4%
Personal	27	7.2%	15	5.6%	42	6.5%
<u>All Other</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>9.4%</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>7.1%</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>8.4%</u>
TOTAL	374	100%	267	9.9%	641	99.8%

Appendix C

Relationship of Homicide Victim to Offender Outside City of Milwaukee 1984-1990

	<u>84-88</u>		<u>89-90</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Spouse/Ex	64	22.9%	37	33.0%	101	25.8%
Other Family	60	21.5%	30	26.8%	90	23.0%
Friend / Acq.	115	41.2%	34	30.3%	149	38.1%
Stranger	40	14.3%	11	9.8%	51	13.0%
<u>Unknown</u>	<u>70</u>		<u>19</u>		<u>89</u>	
TOTAL	349	99.9%	131	99.9%	480	99.9%

Relationship of Homicide Victim to Offender City of Milwaukee 1984-1990

	<u>84-88</u>		<u>89-90</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Spouse/Ex	46	14.5%	33	17.3%	79	15.6%
Other Family	27	8.5%	9	4.7%	36	7.1%
Friend / Acq.	179	56.4%	101	53.1%	280	55.2%
Stranger	65	20.5%	47	24.7%	112	22.0%
<u>Unknown</u>	<u>57</u>		<u>77</u>		<u>134</u>	
TOTAL	374	99.9%	267	99.8%	641	99.9%

