



**SCRIPPS HOWARD
NEWS SERVICE**

2010 SPECIAL REPORT

MURDER MYSTERIES

While the homicide rate has declined in most of the United States, police have failed to solve 185,000 homicides since 1980. An investigation into why more killers are getting away with murder.

**CRIME SCENE
DO NOT CROSS**

About the Murder Mysteries special report

Scripps Howard News Service has conducted the most complete review ever of unsolved homicides in the United States, building a database that allows police – and armchair detectives – to track down serial killers.

So far, the yearlong investigation has:

- Documented 15,000 homicides that were never reported to the FBI
- Led to new investigations into killings in Ohio and Indiana
- Built a computer program that can identify serial killings
- Showed why some police departments are better than others at solving homicides
- Caused the Collier County (Fla.) Sheriff's Office to launch a new initiative to tackle a growing backlog of unsolved homicides
- Inspired at least four police departments to reform the way homicides are recorded

Aggressively using the Freedom of Information Act, and his formidable powers of persuasion with local police departments, SHNS reporter Tom Hargrove built a database of more than 525,000 homicides from the past 30 years.

He found that nearly 185,000 of those killings remain unsolved, and that the success of police departments varies widely across the country. In some cities, only one in five killers is ever caught.

Hargrove then sorted the killings by geography, and gave the information to the Scripps newspapers and TV stations. They investigated the local killings and challenged police departments over their ability to solve these crimes.

One unique feature is the "Serial Killer Tracker" — a program that sorts through the vast data searching for patterns in the weapon, location and type of victim. The tool can be used by investigators and even amateur sleuths to hunt serial killers. Several leads developed by readers were passed on to local police.

The data for this project can be found at <http://www.scrippsnews.com/projects/murdermysteries> and <http://www.scrippsnews.com/projects/serial-killers>.

Sincerely,



Peter Copeland
Editor & General Manager
Scripps Howard News Service

MURDER MYSTERIES

INVESTIGATING AMERICA'S UNSOLVED HOMICIDES

INSIDE

- A growing mystery: The majority of homicides now go unsolved at dozens of big-city police departments **PAGE 4**
- More homicides might be solved if more departments used methods offered by criminology experts **PAGE 10**

REACTION

- **Sloppy accounting prevails for unsolved homicides; some departments plan reforms** **PAGE 13**
- Son's unsolved murder haunts man four years later **PAGE 16**
- SHNS survey finds that at least one adult in nine knows the victim of an unsolved homicide **PAGE 18**
- Some police departments don't report when they solve homicides — exempting them from public scrutiny **PAGE 20**
- The homicide cases that police clear vary widely based on who was murdered and why **PAGE 22**
- A child dies every day in an unsolved homicide **PAGE 27**
- Mass murder rises as other killings decline **PAGE 32**

REACTION

- **Serial killings study prompts police to launch investigations** **PAGE 34**
- Most serial killing victims are women, FBI reports **PAGE 40**
- Were serial killings in Wichita a plague or due to better detection? **PAGE 42**
- How many unsolved murders are serial? **PAGE 44**
- FBI hopes computers can help catch serial killers **PAGE 46**
- SHNS Murder Mysteries in the news across America **PAGE 51**
- **Editorial:** Killers don't have to get away with it **PAGE 54**

CONTRIBUTORS

Reporters

Thomas Hargrove
Elizabeth Lucas
Isaac Wolf

Editorial Writer

Dale McFeatters

Project Editors

Peter Copeland
Carol Guensburg
Lisa Hoffman
Bob Jones
John Lindsay
David Nielsen

Photo Editor

Sheila Person

Multimedia Editor

Jason Bartz

For more information about the project team, visit scrippsnews.com/staff

CONTACTS

202-408-1484
or stories@shns.com.

Our website

www.scrippsnews.com



Scripps Howard News Service is part of the E.W. Scripps Co.



Valencia Mohammed holds images of her sons, Said, left, who was found dead in their home in 1999, and Imtiaz, who was shot to death along a city street in 2004.

Unsolved murders

A growing mystery for most police departments

By THOMAS HARGROVE
Scripps Howard News Service

Every year in America, 6,000 killers get away with murder.

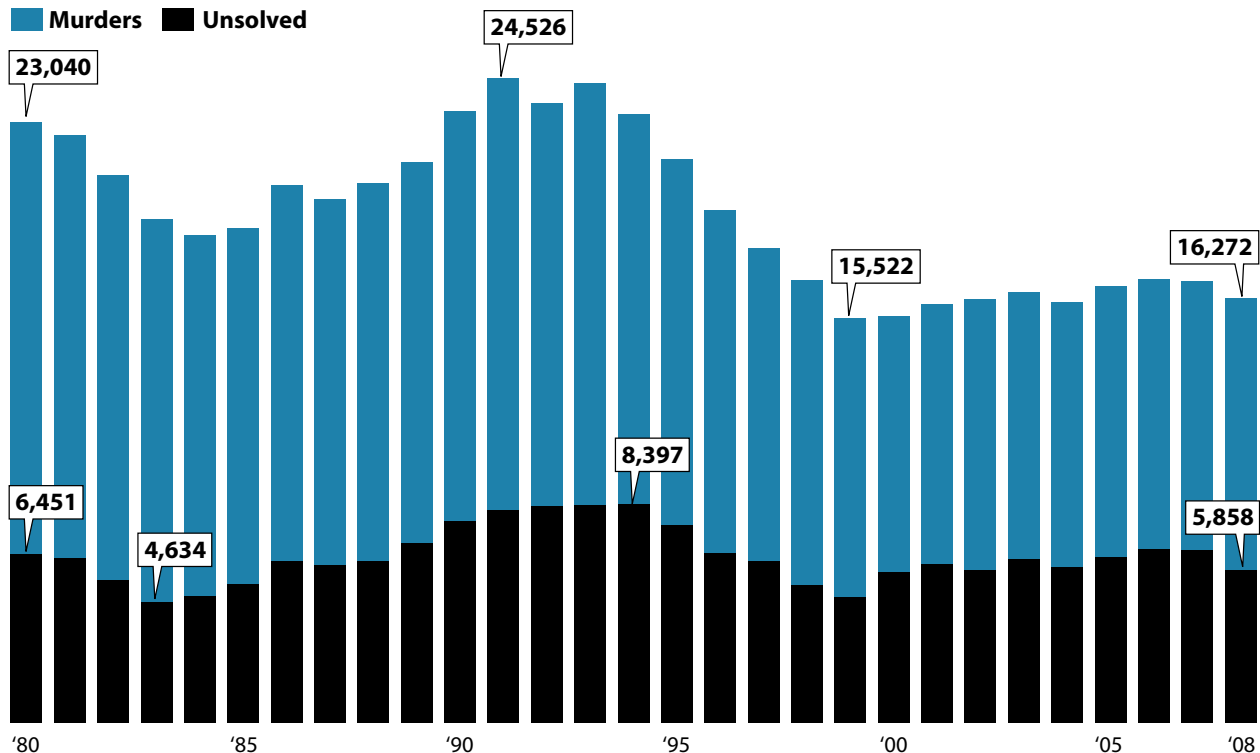
The percentage of homicides that go unsolved in the United States has risen alarmingly even as the homicide rate has fallen to levels last seen in the 1960s.

Despite dramatic improvements in DNA analysis and forensic science, police fail to make an arrest in more than one-third of all homicides. National clearance rates for murder and manslaughter have fallen from about 90 percent in the 1960s to below 65 percent in recent years.

The majority of homicides now go unsolved at dozens of big-city police departments, according to a Scripps Howard News Service study of crime records provided by the FBI.

Fewer homicides but little decline in unsolved cases

Nearly 185,000 cases of homicide and non-negligent manslaughter went unsolved from 1980 to 2008, according to Scripps Howard News Service calculations based upon homicide estimates provided by the FBI.



Notes: This total homicide estimate differs from the counts found in the FBI's Uniform Crime Report and Supplementary Homicide Report. Those two reports are based upon incomplete data provided by local police departments. The homicide totals and clearance rates presented here are estimated by the FBI, based upon the incomplete reporting. The FBI provides this definition of when homicides are considered to be cleared: "Law enforcement agencies clear or solve an offense when at least one person is arrested, charged with the commission of the offense, and turned over to the court for prosecution. Law enforcement agencies may also clear a crime by exceptional means such as when an identified offender is killed during apprehension or commits suicide."

"This is very frightening," said Bill Hagmaier, executive director of the International Homicide Investigators Association and retired chief of the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime. "We'd expect that -- with more police officers, more scientific tools like DNA analysis and more computerized records -- we'd be clearing more homicides now."

Nearly 185,000 killings went unsolved from 1980 to 2008.

Experts say that homicides are tougher to solve now because crimes of passion, where assailants are easier to identify, have been replaced by drug- and gang-related

killings. Many police chiefs -- especially in areas with rising numbers of unsolved crimes -- blame a lack of witness cooperation.

The public is starting to notice.

"When my first son was killed, I was embarrassed and ashamed. Why did this happen to me? But when my second son died, I decided I'd had enough and wanted to be an advocate for murder victims," said Valencia Mohammed, founder of Mothers of Unsolved Murders in Washington, D.C.

Mohammed's 14-year-old son, Said, was found shot to death in his bedroom in 1999. His elder broth-



SHNS photo by Jason Bartz

“This is just like in any industry. If you don’t work a job, then it’s not coming in. That’s the saying around here. So we make our guys work the jobs.”

Richard Ross, veteran Philadelphia homicide investigator and major-case supervisor

er, Imtiaz, 23, was shot to death along a city street in 2004, prompting Mohammed to demand a meeting with police officials.

“I asked, ‘How many unsolved murders do you have?’ They said 3,479 since 1969. That’s when I broke down. I was in tears. I said, ‘I know you guys are not going to solve these murders.’”

Police did catch Imtiaz’s killer four years after the killing, but Said’s homicide remains unsolved.

Some police departments solve most of their homicides, even the tough ones, while others have growing stacks of unsolved cases.

In 2008, police solved 35 percent of the homicides in Chicago, 22 percent in New Orleans and 21 per-

cent in Detroit. Yet authorities solved 75 percent of the killings in Philadelphia, 92 percent in Denver and 94 percent in San Diego.

“We’ve concluded that the major factor is the amount of resources police departments place on homicide clearances and the priority they give to homicide clearances,” said University of Maryland criminologist Charles Wellford, who led a landmark study into how police can improve their murder investigations.

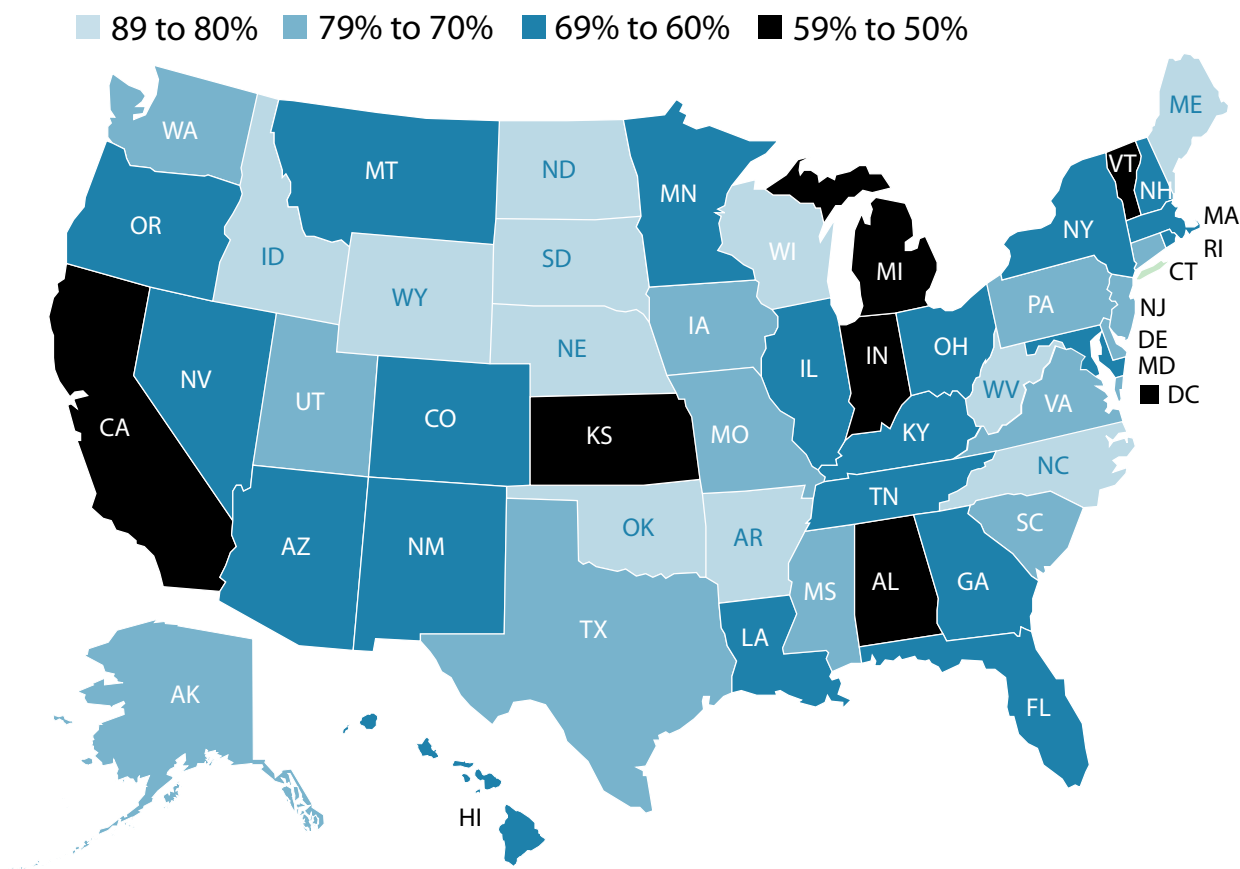
The Scripps study found enormous variation in the rates that homicides are cleared around the nation. The police departments with the most dramatic improvements made concerted and conscious efforts to change.

After homicide clearance rates in Philadelphia

MURDER MYSTERIES

Homicide clearance rates diverge widely across the U.S.

The number of homicides reported, the rate at which homicides are solved through arrest and the estimated number of unsolved homicides from 1980 to 2008, according to a Scripps Howard News Service study of the FBI's Uniform Crime Report.



dropped to 56 percent in 2006, Mayor Michael Nutter declared a “crime emergency.”

He hired Charles Ramsey, former police chief in Washington, D.C., as police commissioner. Ramsey installed a fresh homicide supervisor, Capt. James Clark, who led a results-based oversight of murder investigations similar to total-quality management methods first employed by Japanese manufacturers.

“This is just like in any industry,” said Deputy Commissioner Richard Ross, a veteran Philadelphia homicide investigator and major-case supervisor. “If you don’t work a job, then it’s not coming in. That’s the saying around here. So we make our guys work the jobs.”

Philadelphia’s homicide clearance rate jumped to 75 percent in 2008.

The turnaround in Philadelphia has been repeated in several police departments, the Scripps study found.

“If police organizations say it’s unacceptable to have clearance rates of 50, 40, even 30 percent, then those rates will rise,” Wellford said. “They begin to institute smart policing in their homicide investigations.”

The nation’s biggest improvement, according to the Scripps study, was in Durham, N.C., where homicide clearances averaged only 39 percent in the 1990s following a dramatic increase in drug-related crime. But the solution rate rose to an average of 78 percent for the city’s 215 killings since 2000.

“This doesn’t happen in a vacuum,” said Durham Police Chief Jose Lopez.

“We will canvass door-to-door to see what infor-

State	Murders	Clearance	Unsolved	State	Murders	Clearance	Unsolved
Alabama	11,026	55%	4,974	Missouri	11,837	73%	3,176
Alaska	1,256	74%	327	Montana	528	68%	170
Arizona	9,827	61%	3,791	Nebraska	1,462	84%	239
Arkansas	5,780	82%	1,068	Nevada	4,282	63%	1,597
California	82,463	59%	33,456	New Hampshire	501	67%	165
Colorado	5,198	66%	1,765	New Jersey	11,381	71%	3,326
Connecticut	4,100	71%	1,203	New Mexico	3,526	65%	1,224
Delaware	859	72%	244	New York ¹	45,740	65%	16,104
District of Columbia	8,066	53%	3,778	North Carolina	16,684	81%	3,155
Florida	31,715	60%	12,658	North Dakota	224	82%	40
Georgia	18,383	60%	7,282	Ohio	15,831	65%	5,501
Hawaii	1,128	64%	411	Oklahoma	6,857	83%	1,132
Idaho	937	81%	176	Oregon	3,268	64%	1,189
Illinois ¹	25,254	64%	8,974	Pennsylvania	19,517	77%	4,427
Indiana	9,485	57%	4,098	Rhode Island	980	64%	348
Iowa	1,459	73%	389	South Carolina	9,461	77%	2,153
Kansas	2,865	55%	1,281	South Dakota	320	80%	64
Kentucky	5,443	69%	1,670	Tennessee	12,080	67%	3,952
Louisiana	16,863	64%	6,110	Texas	52,402	71%	15,050
Maine	701	80%	139	Utah	1,561	73%	424
Maryland	14,004	66%	4,752	Vermont	295	57%	128
Massachusetts	5,129	61%	2,022	Virginia	12,932	74%	3,335
Michigan	23,682	52%	11,367	Washington	6,234	71%	1,826
Minnesota	3,411	60%	1,358	West Virginia	2,533	82%	449
Mississippi	5,502	73%	1,505	Wisconsin	5,051	81%	965
				Wyoming	498	89%	55

1 — The number of unsolved homicides was estimated for Illinois and New York since these states provide only partial data for the number of clearances.

Note: The total number of homicides in this report is taken from the FBI's Uniform Crime Report and is greater than the totals found in the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report. More police departments report UCR data, which is required for departments to qualify for Justice Department grants.

mation we can get. If necessary, we'll get up to 100 officers knocking on doors," Lopez said. "It's civilians, police, even elected officials who come out so we can get more witnesses ... witnesses we otherwise would never have gotten. And that builds more trust throughout the neighborhoods."

While several departments have shown similar improvements, most have not. The average homicide solution rate during the last two decades fell in 63 of the nation's 100 largest departments.

The departments in Flint, Mich., and Dayton, Ohio, suffered the worst declines in performance; the average homicide clearance rate fell more than 30 percent since the 1990s in both cities.

"Often we know with some degree of certainty

who committed homicides but do not have sufficient witness cooperation needed for proof beyond a reasonable doubt in court," said Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl.

Both cities suffered substantial declines in manpower, due to budget cuts. Since 1990, Flint dropped from 330 sworn officers to 185 while Dayton went from more than 500 to 394.

"That's just part of the problem," said Flint Police Chief Alvern Lock. "Witnesses don't want to cooperate with police."

But Lock said budget constraints have hurt.

"If I had a magic wand, I'd ask for more money so I could hire more officers. We just need more of everything."

1965
91%

**FBI's estimated
homicide clearance rates**

1983
76%

How to clear the way to solving homicides

Many 'best practices' known to improve investigations

By THOMAS HARGROVE
Scripps Howard News Service

While homicide clearance rates have declined across the nation from about 90 percent in the 1960s to below 65 percent in recent years, some police departments have bucked the trend.

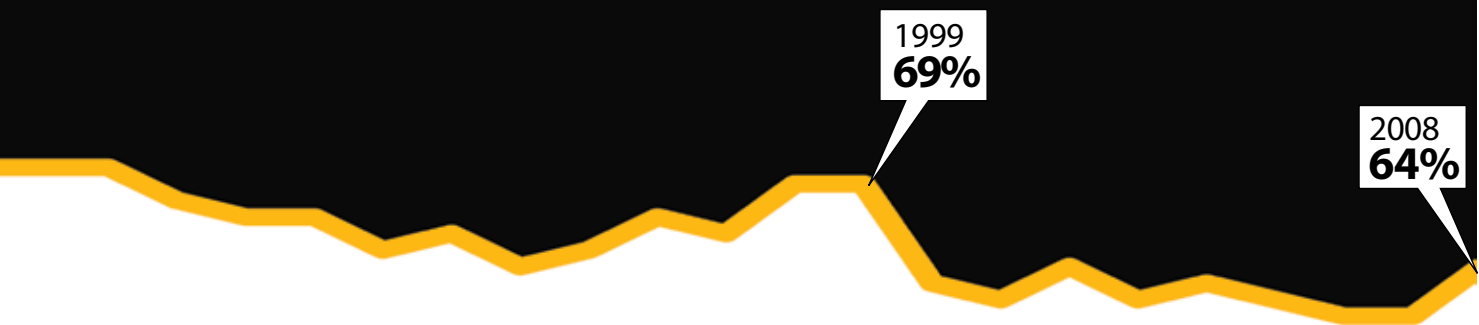
Many of those police departments, including those in Durham, N.C., Santa Ana, Calif., and Polk County, Fla., are using cutting-edge murder-investigation techniques.

"We think that all departments could improve their clearance rates if they would provide a priority to homicide clearances and begin to use these best practices that are slowly emerging from the research base," concluded University of Maryland criminologist Charles Wellford.

When is a case 'cleared'?

The Department of Justice considers a homicide case to be cleared when "at least one person is arrested, charged with the commission of the offense, and turned over to the court for prosecution." In some cases, a crime may be cleared by "exceptional means" when an identified offender is killed during apprehension or commits suicide.

Source: Scripps Howard analysis of FBI data



The most common recommendations by criminology scholars and Department of Justice researchers to improve homicide investigations:

Make homicide clearance a priority

Keep track of the department's clearance rates. Apply additional resources such as increased manpower or improved training for investigators to clear a backlog of cold cases. If necessary, create a specialized cold-case squad or, better, a multi-departmental cold-case task force.

When clearance rates dropped to 42 percent during the 1990s, Santa Ana asked for federal grants to hire extra detectives to work the growing numbers of unsolved homicides. The clearance rates rose to 69 percent since 2000 — the third-best improvement for any major police department, according to a Scripps Howard News Service study of FBI homicide records.

"We had a federally funded cold-case project about 13 years ago. Everyone saw how successful it could be," said Santa Ana Police Chief Paul M. Walters.

Track open cases

Make sure homicide supervisors keep track of open cases through so-called "compstat" analysis — usually, computer-based tracking to provide a multilayered approach to personnel and resource management of local crime. Hold regular meetings with homicide investigators. Departments making effective use of Computerized Case-Management Systems (CCMS) were documented to have at least a 5 percent improvement in homicide

MURDER MYSTERIES

clearance rates, according to one FBI study.

“Accountability is the key,” said Philadelphia Deputy Police Commissioner Richard Ross. “Homicide departments don’t run themselves. There’s nothing like having to sit in front of your captain and explain the status of every case.”

Philadelphia adopted its own compstat system when city officials declared a crime emergency after homicide clearances dropped to 56 percent in 2006. They rose to 75 percent by 2008.

Make sure there is sufficient manpower at the crime scene

The latest Justice Department recommendations suggest that a minimum of two, two-person teams be sent to the scene as quickly as possible. Large police departments that regularly send eight or 10 experienced investigators to the scene have produced above-average clearance results.

“We know that the longer the period awaiting an arrest, the less likely that arrest will be,” said Polk County, Fla., Sheriff Grady Judd. “We send a team of four to eight supervisors, homicide detectives and crime-scene technicians to the scene. And we work the cold cases, too.”

Detectives in Polk County east of Tampa were solving only 56 percent of homicides during the 1990s. But new priorities and investigative techniques pushed clearance averages to 84 percent in recent years — the second-largest improvement in the study.

Make sure investigators get the time needed to solve murders

Don’t be stingy with overtime, especially when investigators are in hot pursuit of evidence. Departments that allow senior detectives to approve their own overtime have a 9 percent higher clearance rate, according to FBI data.

“That’s something I’ve been yelling about for

years. So now we authorize the payment of overtime so investigators don’t have to worry about being compensated while working the big cases,” said Durham, N.C., Police Chief Jose Lopez.

Durham experienced the nation’s largest improvement in homicide clearance rates, rising from 39 percent in the 1990s to 78 percent since 2008 thanks to a number of reforms.

Crime experts and veteran cops also recommend:

Be generous with training. Make sure investigators know the current best practices through so-called “in-service” training rather than assuming they learned everything at the police academy.

Train first responders. Make sure the first responders — beat cops who usually are the first to a homicide scene — know how to protect evidence, identify witnesses and assist in neighborhood canvasses for witnesses. It is critical that they know whom to call — detectives, medical examiners and crime-scene technicians — in the first minutes of an investigation.

Make best use of information technology. Probably most important is automated information-sharing between homicide detectives, narcotics investigators, gang specialists and street intelligence units. Killers and associates of killers often have a long and detailed history with local police.

Utilize new evidence technology. DNA matching of blood or almost any other physical evidence from an assailant’s body is a powerful tool. But so are less prominent techniques such as voice-stress analysis and statement analysis, blood-stain-pattern analysis and criminal investigative analysis also known as profiling.



BOB GWALTNEY, COURIER & PRESS ARCHIVES

William Badger Jr. pickets in Evansville, Ind., to draw attention to his mother's unsolved murder. Linda Hammack was killed in her home on Nov. 18, 2002.

AMERICA'S POLICE DEPARTMENTS REACT

Sloppy accounting prevails for America's unsolved homicides

By THOMAS HARGROVE
Scripps Howard News Service

Many police departments around the nation have misreported whether they've solved longstanding homicide cases, raising new doubts on how capably America is combating its most serious violent crimes.

Significant flaws in the FBI's Uniform Crime Report system were uncovered in a national reporting project by Scripps Howard News Service and 23 participating newspapers and television stations. Several local police agencies promised to reform their major

crime reporting as a result of the "Murder Mysteries" project.

Police nationally reported solving 91 percent of all homicides in 1965 during the earliest days of the Uniform Crime Report. But the clearance rate dropped steadily over the years, dipping to just 64 percent in 2008.

Many major police departments now report that they are clearing less than half of all homicides. But they are also making themselves look even worse than necessary by inaccurately reporting to state and fed-



SHNS photo by Denny Simmons/Evansville Courier & Press

eral authorities when they close homicides by arresting and charging people with the crimes.

“We have reviewed our homicide clearances for the past 10 years and found that some offenses should have been cleared that were not,” said Richard Biehl, chief of police in Dayton, Ohio.

Dayton police made arrests in 80 percent of the 423 homicides committed in their jurisdiction during the 1990s. But city officials told the FBI and the Ohio Department of Public Safety that they cleared just 36 percent of the 302 homicides committed from 2000 to 2008 – one of the nation’s worst declines in homicide clearance, according to a study of murder records by Scripps Howard.

Biehl, in response to the study, ordered a staff review and learned the city had failed to include 24 murder arrests in addition to 109 killings Dayton reported to have cleared. That would have raised the city’s clearance rate to about 44 percent.

The city has ordered reforms.

“Reporting errors were human error on our part, in some cases. In others, the cases were solved after the reporting period and beyond the 18-month window

to submit an amended report that would be credited to our clearance rates,” said Dayton’s Lt. Patrick Welsh. “The deficiencies in those reports have been corrected and we are all on the same page for current and proper dispositions on case files.”

Police officials were often startled when shown what they had reported to the FBI.

“Sixty-four other counties cannot be that far ahead of this county, I can tell you that right now!” said Kevin Rambosk, sheriff of Florida’s Collier County, after learning his jurisdiction had Florida’s third-worst clearance rate.

But the county failed to report more than 30 arrests out of the 154 reported cold cases since 2000, dropping Collier County’s clearance rate to an anemic 57 percent. After his investigation, Rambosk ordered reforms.

“Direction has been given to begin submitting clearance information in the years they occur and we will be sending a letter to (the Florida Department of Law Enforcement) to clarify past clearance information once it is compiled,” Rambosk said.

He also organized a team of investigators to

review all cold cases and report on the status of each case.

Serious reporting problems were found even in small police departments with a modest caseload of unsolved killings.

“We just didn’t do the right paperwork,” said Peter Hansen, chief of Redding, Calif., when asked why four murder arrests out of an apparent 10 cold cases have not been properly reported to state and federal authorities.

The largest error rate discovered by the reporting project was at the Flint, Mich., Police Department, which reported clearing 64 percent of all homicides committed during the 1990s but only 20 percent in recent years.

“I kind of think there is a problem with those numbers,” admitted Flint Police Chief Alvern Lock.

Lock instructed his staff to review case files for the last three years and found that the city was making arrests in about 32 percent of their cases. “We had a problem with one of our vendors doing our crime reporting,” a city clerk said.

Flint had to outsource its crime-reporting services because severe budget cuts in the once-manufacturing-dominated city saw the department drop from 330 sworn officers in 1990 to about 185 today.

The Justice Department requires that local police departments must report the occurrence of crimes – but not whether they’ve been solved – to be eligible for federal law enforcement grants.

Independent criminologists warn that sloppy accounting of fatal crimes underscores a general failure by many police agencies to address a growing backlog of unsolved homicides.

“This should be a central concern to the public,”

said University of Maryland criminologist Charles Wellford. “The fact that police leaders do not pay attention to clearance rates indicates they are not considering how well they are playing their central role in crime prevention.”

FBI spokesman Stephen Fischer issued a written statement “by appropriate staff” at the Criminal Justice Information Services Division in Clarksburg, W.Va., on how murder clearance reporting could have become so inaccurate in recent years.

The statement said the bureau does not audit homicide clearance reports, although it does check

the accuracy of reported crime occurrences. The Scripps study found that occurrence reports are generally, but not always, more accurate than homicide clearance claims.

“The FBI relies on the good faith reporting of law enforcement agencies who voluntarily participate in the program,” bureau authorities said in a prepared statement responding to the discoveries.

The statement said that the FBI’s Quality Assurance Review

“does not conduct audits of clearance information” but does instruct local police on the “general clearance procedures at local agencies to determine compliance to Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program guidelines.”

The bureau has never conducted a study into the quality of homicide clearance data. But the FBI said there has been no decline in the quality of training it provides for state and local agencies reporting to the UCR program.

“There has been no reduction in federal funding for training or in the quality or content of training provided,” the statement said.

“The deficiencies in those reports have been corrected and we are all on the same page for current and proper dispositions on case files.”

Lt. Patrick Welsh
Dayton, Ohio, Police Department

Thoughts of vengeance haunt man years after son's killing

By ISAAC WOLF
Scripps Howard News Service

WAYNESBURG, Pa. — Almost five years after his son was murdered, Bruce Shipe admitted something to his wife, Jan, for the first time: There are moments when he ponders becoming a vigilante and taking justice into his own hands.

The 67-year-old dentist knows these are crazy thoughts about acts that he would never commit. But he thinks them anyway because his son's killer has never been caught.

Sitting for an interview at his kitchen table in March in this town about an hour's drive south of Pittsburgh, Shipe revealed this fantasy in which he exacts revenge against the unknown person who shot their only son, Greg Shipe, in the face on Sept. 17, 2005, in Washington, D.C., leaving the 34-year-old to die.

"I have a pistol, and I've thought, 'You know, I'm going to go on that street,'" Shipe says. "I'm going to walk that street at night, daring somebody.' You harbor these thoughts — it's stupid, I know, really stupid, I know — but I thought it. I would never do it, but I've harbored those thoughts.

"Is that anger, is that vengeance? I'm not sure. But I don't think anger — or bitterness — has ever been our theme. It wasn't his. We weren't raised that way."

To this day, what happened on that Saturday night, in a quiet neighborhood popular with young Washington professionals, remains a mystery. The



SHNS PHOTO COURTESY THE SHIPE FAMILY

Greg Shipe was shot in the face on Sept. 17, 2005, in Washington, D.C. His killer has not been caught.

assailant took no cash or valuables, Jan Shipe, 61, says. All her son had with him was a cell phone and a bag to clean up after his dog, she says.

As the couple near retirement, they still grapple with Greg's death. They've lost hope that their son's killer will be brought to justice. There's no way to make sense of it, they say. There's no one to get answers from.

"It's like having a disease, a debilitating disease like diabetes," says Jan Shipe, describing the pain of losing Greg. "You hate that you have it. You're mad that you have it. You don't want it. But you've got it. And you have to deal with it."

The Shipes are not alone. A Scripps Howard News Service investigation revealed that one-third of the estimated 565,600 homicides in the United States from 1980 to 2008 remain unsolved.

In Washington, D.C., the police have struggled for decades to solve homicides, according to an SHNS analysis of FBI data. The city's Metropolitan Police Department has cleared 53 percent of homicides from 1980 to 2008, well below the national average of 67 percent.

Detective Tony Patterson of the Metropolitan Police Department investigated Greg Shipe's murder. He pursued two leads, but, with little evidence, he recently turned the probe over to the department's cold case unit.

The most likely way the crime will be solved is if an individual with knowledge of the case shares information with the police, Patterson says. "I would

hope that at some point, someone who knows something will come forward," he says. "I'm optimistic it will close. Of course, I said that three years ago."

Patterson isn't sure of the killer's motive, and says there's little evidence to support any theory of why Shipe was murdered.

But Bruce Shipe can't help but think about the killer's intentions.

"You wonder. The police said it was a botched robbery. It could've been gang bangers saying, 'I get

"It's just being at the wrong place at the right time. Or the right place at the wrong time. You can't make sense of it."

— Bruce Shipe

a white kid and I get stripes or whatever.' It could be anything," he said. "It's just being at the wrong place at the right time. Or the right place at the wrong time. You can't make sense of it."

Shipe's murder came as his adult life was just beginning to take shape. A year after receiving an MBA from Vanderbilt University's business school, Shipe had started a new job as an analyst at Ogilvy. He had recently moved into his apartment in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, and was walking his dog, Otis, when he was shot.

"That's what's so hard — not seeing what he could have become," says Bruce Shipe, still in the blue scrubs he wears while practicing as a dentist. "He was just really getting started, I think."

1 in 9

Those are the odds you know
a victim of an unsolved homicide

**By ELIZABETH LUCAS and
THOMAS HARGROVE**
Scripps Howard News Service

Nearly one-third of American adults personally know the victim of a homicide.

Of those, 35 percent say the police never identified who killed their friends, relatives, neighbors or acquaintances.

A survey of 1,001 adults interviewed by telephone from Feb. 3 to March 9, 2010, by Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University found that at least one adult in nine personally knew the victim of an unsolved homicide.

"It was just a huge shock and sadness over that," said the Rev. Ray Dykes, 67, of Oklahoma City about the 2005 death of Tom Young, 75, a professional home-

builder and participant in his "Personal Pastor" outreach program for people not involved in traditional congregations.

Police never identified who robbed and killed Young, found beaten to death in one of his unsold homes.

"We were just very puzzled," Dykes said.

Like 79 percent of the adults in the survey, Dykes said he believes police generally do a good job when investigating murders.

But the survey also found that attitudes toward the quality of police investigations, and opinions about whether enough money is spent on them, change depending on what experience Americans had with homicides.

Adults who do not personally

know murder victims are much more likely to praise police than those who do, especially those who knew victims of unsolved crimes.

"It's a shock when someone gets murdered in your neighborhood," said Tom Nisbet, 57, of Brunswick Cove, N.C. One of Nisbet's neighbors, Mark Deegan Johnson, was shot and killed in his own home in 2008.

Nisbet said he thinks police generally do not do a good job in murder cases and believes more should be spent investigating homicides.

"From what I can discern, nothing is being done," Nisbet said of Johnson's killing. "I'd like to know that somebody who did something like that was brought to justice."



SHNS PHOTO BY CHUCK KIRMAN / VENTURA COUNTY STAR

A Ventura County, Calif., sheriff's chaplain talks with a housekeeper outside the Faria Beach home where Brock and Davina Husted were fatally stabbed.

Nearly half (49 percent) of adults in the survey who personally know the victim of a homicide said that not enough is spent to investigate murders. About 43 percent of people who do not personally know a homicide victim said the same.

Among Americans who personally know a homicide victim, blacks and Hispanics are almost twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to say that the police failed to identify the killers.

Blacks are three times more likely than whites to be critical of the job police do investigating

homicides. Hispanics, Asians and other racial minorities are at least twice as likely as whites to be critical of police.

The odds of knowing a homicide victim are greater among racial and ethnic minority groups, among men and among less-educated people.

But regardless of race or ethnicity, significant numbers of Americans personally knew victims of unsolved murders.

"Really a mystery," John Rook, 70, of Ozark, Ala., said of the 1999 shooting of two teenage girls

found in the trunk of their car on a deserted road.

Cheryl Burgoon, mother of one of the girls, J.B. Beasley, has regular contact with the police. More than a decade later they are still investigating the case, and she is confident they are doing all they can to find the killer(s).

"It is a solvable case, it's just not solved," she said. When it is, "It's going to be a whole new world again."

The telephone survey was sponsored through a grant by the Scripps Howard Foundation. It has a 4 percent margin of error.

Some police departments fail to report murder solution

By **ELIZABETH LUCAS**
Scripps Howard News Service

Police departments from some of the nation's largest cities, including New York City, fail to tell the FBI how many homicides they solve each year, exempting them from public scrutiny or criticism over their efforts to solve fatal crime.

Participation in the FBI's Uniform Crime Report program is voluntary for most departments since few states or local governments have laws that mandate cooperation with federal crime-monitoring efforts.

The vast majority of the nation's police departments do comply. But because some do not, a precise accounting of how many murders are solved nationwide each year is not possible. Instead, the FBI takes what is reported — roughly 91 percent of the total — and estimates the rest.

The nation's largest police force, the New York City Police Department, has not reported clearance information since 2002, although the city does report how many homicides have occurred.

Officials with the NYPD refused to comment on why the city doesn't report homicide clearances.

The city reports to the state's Division of Criminal Justice Services, which then reports to the FBI.

John Caher, the division's director of public information, said the NYPD reports whatever it's inclined to report.

"We're required to collect the data and provide it to the FBI," he said. "Unfortunately, the localities are not required to provide it to us."

Gary, Ind., police also withhold homicide clear-

ances in their reporting to the FBI. Indiana, unlike most states, does not have a state-run Uniform Crime Report program. Local police departments are responsible for reporting directly to the FBI.

Vincentria Franklin, crime-analysis technician for the Gary Police Department, said she does not report the clearance numbers because her predecessor did not report them. As far as she knows, there is no policy in place for reporting crime data.

States with Uniform Crime Report programs usually collect all local crime data for submission to the FBI. Some states, such as Illinois and California, also have statutes that require local agencies to report.

Yet even if there is a mandate, there is rarely a penalty for not reporting.

"It's more or less a voluntary system," said Lee Britton, manager of the Criminal Justice Statistics Center for the California Department of Justice.

Compliance is high in California, Britton said, because local agencies recognize the benefits of having crime statistics. For example, agencies must often provide them when applying for grants.

"There's a lot of indirect benefit from these statistics," she said.

Illinois' program requires that agencies report the number of arrests for a given offense, not clearances. The two numbers are not the same, and clearances are not reported to the FBI by the state.

Illinois changed its reporting system in 1995, according to Terri Dietrich, manager of the state's Uniform Crime Report Program.

"Our emphasis in arrest-data collection changed,



SHNS PHOTO BY CHUCK KIRMAN / VENTURA COUNTY STAR

Police officers in California investigate the scene of a murder. California requires that local agencies report their homicide clearance numbers.

and was directed at reporting the number of persons arrested for a specific offense,” Dietrich said. “We get a cumulative total every month.”

Homicide clearance rates cannot be calculated for police departments in Illinois based on the state’s data.

Yet some Illinois agencies still keep track of clearances. The Chicago Police Department publishes its homicide clearances, along with all of its other crime statistics, in an annual report available on its website.

The Rockford Police Department installed a new records-management system in 2005 that allows it to report directly to the FBI, according to Craig Youngberg, the system administrator.

“We actually report our crime statistics two places, to the state of Illinois and to the FBI,” Youngberg said. The department reports to the FBI’s National

Incident-Based Reporting System, allowing for more comprehensive reports that include clearances.

Richard Rosenfeld, professor of criminology and criminal justice at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, said he understands why clearance is a difficult issue for police departments.

“It can be misleading when a number of arrests that should be applied to this year’s clearance rate aren’t made until some other reporting period,” he said.

For example, a homicide that occurred and is reported in one year may not be solved until the next. Clearances do not necessarily match the offenses reported at the same time.

“The clearance rate is a kind of opaque statistic,” Rosenfeld said, “not one the public easily understands.”

What kind get solved?

By **THOMAS HARGROVE**
Scripps Howard News Service

More than one-third of America's killers are getting away with murder. But the odds of avoiding justice are much greater if the victim is a young black man.

The deliberate killings of men, members of racial and ethnic minorities and young adults are much less likely to be solved than other kinds of homicides, according to a Scripps Howard News Service analysis of detailed FBI computer files of more than half a million homicides committed from 1980 to 2008.

But these trends are also related to the reasons

for killing. Homicides involving drugs and gangs are much less likely to be solved than almost any other kind of killing. Most homicide victims — like their assailants — were young, racial- or ethnic-minority males.

“The stranger-on-stranger murders, the ones that seem to be motiveless, are much more difficult



SHNS PHOTO BY JASON BARTZ

“In a large percentage of homicides where a woman is the victim, the offender is a close associate — husband, partner or relative. Because that’s the case, people will be able to tell you about it.”

— Charles Wellford,
University of Maryland
criminologist

to solve,” said Bill Hagmaier, a former FBI homicide supervisor who heads the International Homicide Investigators Association. “The higher risk of the victim, the more difficult the case is to solve. Gang members, prostitutes, runaways, these are people who put themselves in harm’s way. They also put themselves in an environment where there is less of a chance that there will be cooperating witnesses.”

As a result, there are clear and sometimes cruel patterns to the victims listed among the nation’s nearly 185,000 unsolved homicides from 1980 through 2008.

The Scripps study found that police reported to the FBI that they’d failed to identify the killer — much less, to make an arrest — in nearly one-third of

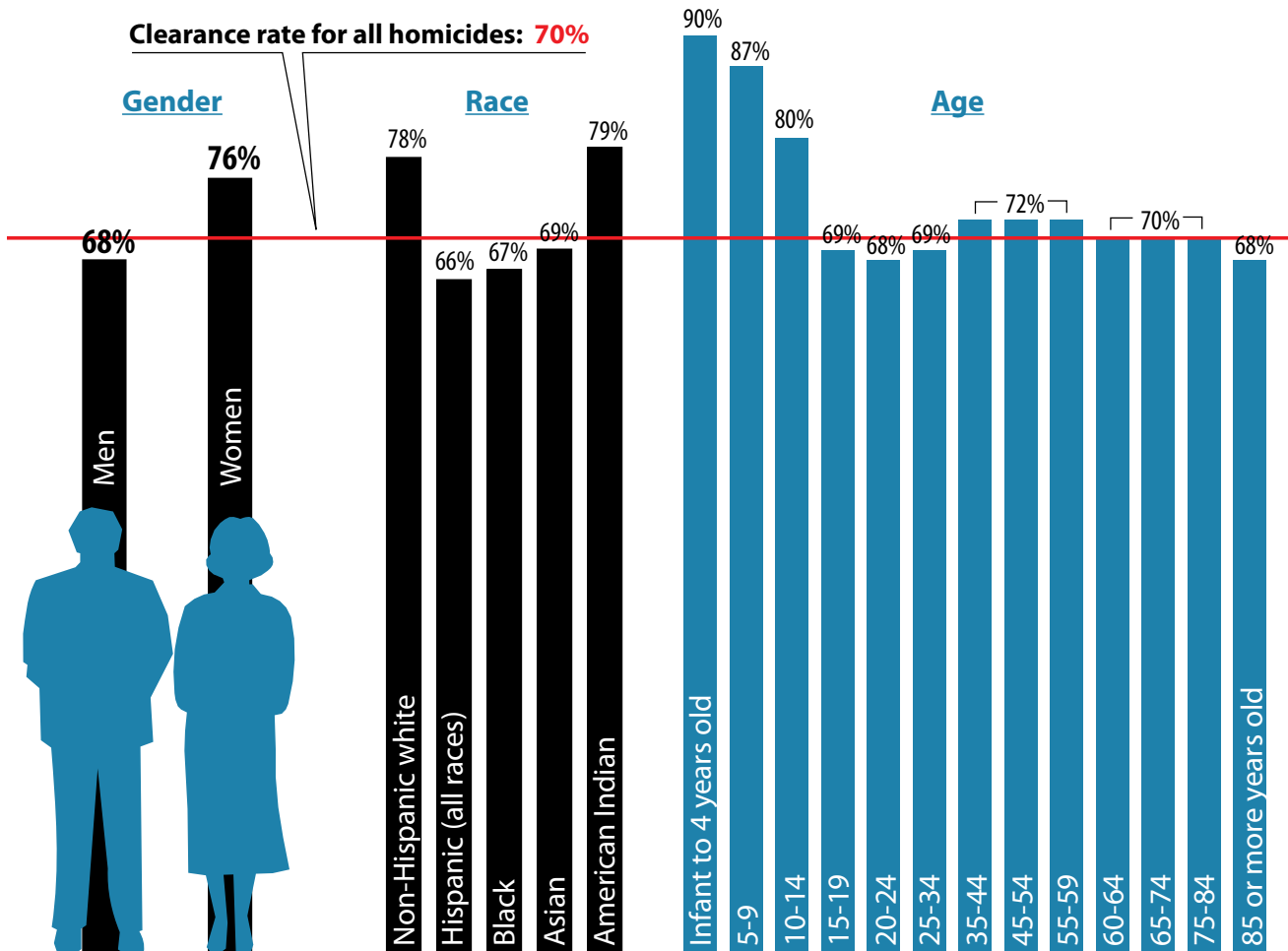
all killings of men compared to only one-fourth of the homicides of women.

“In a large percentage of homicides where a woman is the victim, the offender is a close associate — husband, partner or relative,” said University of Maryland criminologist Charles Wellford. “Because that’s the case, people will be able to tell you about it. There may be many witnesses to it including family members.”

The study found that, for much the same reasons, police identify the killer 90 percent of the time in the homicides of children and infants under the age of 5. These killings often involve family members or close friends. The lowest identification rate of killers (68 percent) is among the homicides of young adults between 20 and 24 years of age.

Percentage of homicide cases police clear based on ...

The nature of a homicide — who was killed and why — has a profound impact on the odds that police will identify the killer. Scripps Howard News Service analyzed 525,742 Supplementary Homicide Reports that local police sent to the FBI describing homicides and non-negligent manslaughter cases from 1980 to 2008. Percentages indicate whether police were able to identify the offender.

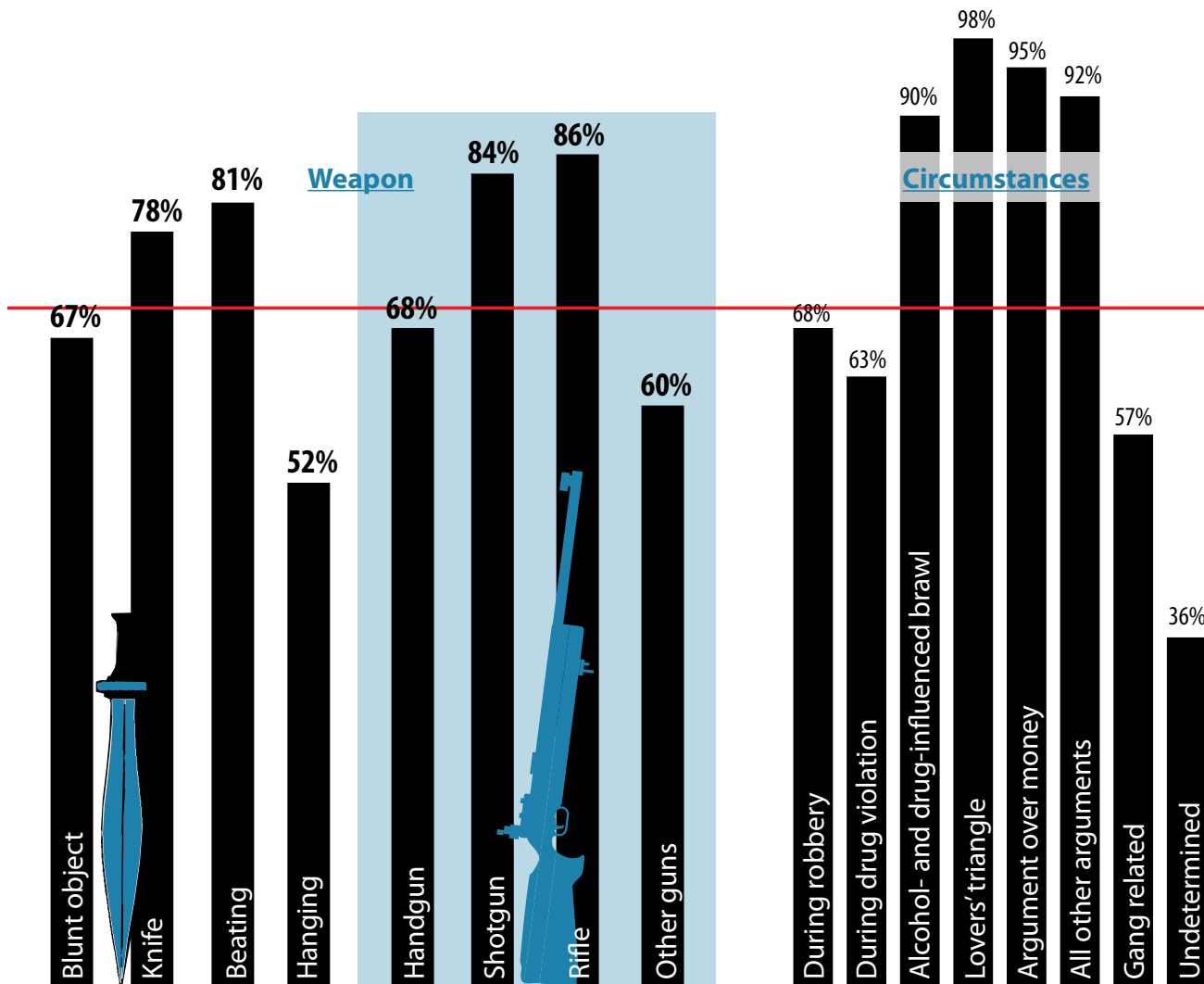


The killer is identified by police about 67 percent of the time when the victim is black or Hispanic, and only 64 percent for black victims between 20 and 24 years old. But when the victim is a non-Hispanic white person of any age, a suspect is identified 78 percent of the time.

But it's in the apparent motives of homicides where the discrepancies in solution rates become enormous.

According to the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report — in which police are asked if they can identify the killer rather than if they've made an arrest — 98 percent of all homicides involving a lover's triangle or other lover's quarrels are solved. About 95 percent of all homicides that erupted from an emotional argument over money are also solved.

Also easily identified are the killers who take human life during an alcohol- or drug-influenced



Source: Scripps Howard analysis of the Supplementary Homicide Report provided by the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division at Clarksburg, W.Va. The percentages and homicide totals in this chart differ from the figures reported in the FBI's Uniform Crime Report. The percentages here indicate whether police identified the suspect. The Uniform Crime Report shows the number of cases cleared through arrest.

“brawl” — the term FBI statisticians used for a fatal fight regardless of the kind of weapons used. Police identify the offender in about 90 percent of these homicides.

But solution rates quickly drop when human passion is not the cause.

Only about two-thirds of all robbery-based homicides are solved. About 63 percent of killings committed during an illegal drug transaction are solved, as are only 57 percent of killings over gang-related disputes.

“When women are victims, by the way, in cases of gang-related homicides, the clearance rates are actually lower than when there is a male victim,” said Wellford. “We have no idea why.”

At the bottom of the scale of solution probabilities were the 139,491 homicides in which police were not able to guess at the motive for the killing. Only 36 percent of the perpetrators of these truly mysterious killings were identified.



SHNS PHOTO BY JASON REDMOND

LaWanda Hawkins holds a photo of son Reginald LaKeith Reese at her home in San Pedro, Calif. He was murdered in 1995.

26 SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE 2010

A child dies every day in an unsolved homicide

By **THOMAS HARGROVE**
Scripps Howard News Service

Unsolved homicides like the much-publicized slaying of 6-year-old JonBenet Ramsey are actually a daily event in the United States.

Police report they don't know who committed more than 10,700 killings of children from 1980 through 2008. Of the 51,753 murders of juveniles 17 or younger, nearly 21 percent were unsolved.

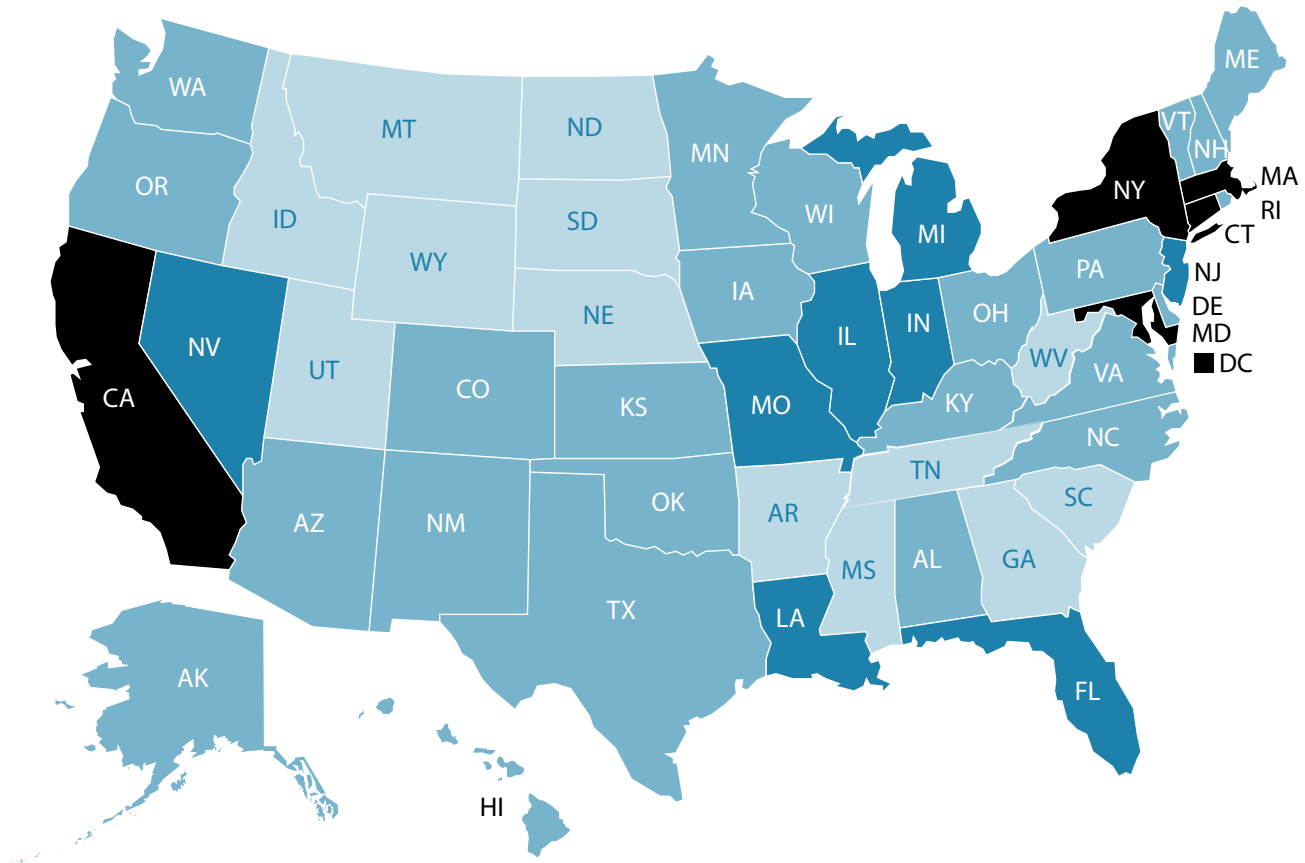
Slightly more than one unsolved homicide of a child occurred each day during this period, according to Scripps Howard News Service's first-of-its-kind analysis of crime files provided by the FBI and local police departments.

"Too many are going unsolved," said LaWanda Hawkins of San Pedro, Calif. She founded the advocacy group Justice for Murdered Children following the 1995 killing of her son, Reginald.

"We've found that when much time goes by without the case being solved, the killers often go

Children's cases that have gone unsolved

■ More than 25% ■ 25% to 20% ■ 19% to 10% ■ Less than 10%



on and kill again,” she said. “We have to realize the mistakes that we’ve made — all of us, police, parents, everybody. We have to stop the silence that surrounds this problem.”

Child murders are more likely to be solved than adult homicides. About 31 percent of cases involving victims 18 or older were reported as unsolved. But crime experts see little cause for celebration.

“The real question is why aren’t the solution rates even higher than this?” asked Charles Wellford, a criminologist at the University of Maryland and an expert in homicide clearance. “It’s often very clear who did these crimes.”

Infants and very young children are especially

vulnerable to fatal violence from family members, whether despondent mothers suffering from post-partum depression or angry stepfathers and boyfriends unhappy with the demands of unwanted parenthood. From 1980 through 2008, police reported 17,210 homicides involving infants through children in their fourth year, compared to only 3,099 killings of children 5 through 9 years old.

But crime experts warn that statistics about child homicides and how often such cases are solved are imperfect. Participation in the FBI’s Supplementary Homicide Report program is entirely voluntary. Many police departments decline to report how many cases they’ve solved or how many cases involved juvenile

The following are the number of homicides of children and teenagers 17 or younger reported by police departments from 1980 to 2008 and the percentage of cases in which the perpetrator was not identified.

<u>State</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Not solved</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Not solved</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Not solved</u>
Alabama	698	17.3%	Kentucky	407	16.0%	North Dakota	33	9.1%
Alaska	175	12.0%	Louisiana	1,396	21.1%	Ohio	1,668	17.3%
Arizona	1,086	16.4%	Maine	92	16.3%	Oklahoma	815	11.0%
Arkansas	518	8.5%	Maryland	1,451	27.4%	Oregon	429	12.6%
California	9,101	28.7%	Massachusetts	535	29.2%	Pennsylvania	1,900	15.3%
Colorado	696	11.4%	Michigan	2,206	20.9%	Rhode Island	105	19.0%
Connecticut	476	27.5%	Minnesota	426	13.1%	South Carolina	729	4.8%
Delaware	81	11.1%	Mississippi	413	9.7%	South Dakota	54	9.3%
D.C.	494	56.7%	Missouri	1,387	23.7%	Tennessee	821	9.1%
Florida	2,478	20.0%	Montana	56	5.4%	Texas	4,713	13.6%
Georgia	1,385	7.1%	Nebraska	149	8.7%	Utah	287	9.4%
Hawaii	112	15.2%	Nevada	394	20.6%	Vermont	38	15.8%
Idaho	139	7.2%	New Hampshire	75	16.0%	Virginia	1,093	14.9%
Illinois	2,725	24.3%	New Jersey	1,242	21.2%	Washington	819	17.2%
Indiana	930	21.1%	New Mexico	356	15.2%	West Virginia	193	8.3%
Iowa	195	10.3%	New York	3,883	31.9%	Wisconsin	739	12.0%
Kansas	288	16.0%	North Carolina	1,193	13.3%	Wyoming	79	5.1%
United States			51,753	20.8%				

Source: Most information was obtained from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report, although some information from Florida and the District of Columbia was obtained by Scripps Howard News Service using Freedom of Information laws.

victims.

Scripps Howard's analysis included detailed records of 15,322 homicides that were not reported to the FBI. These cases were obtained under local Freedom of Information Act laws from police departments in Florida and the District of Columbia. They included 1,366 deaths of children, 266 of which were not solved.

Few child killings received as much publicity as JonBenet Ramsey's — a child beauty-pageant contestant found brutally slain in the basement of her parents' Boulder, Colo., home in 1996. But Ramsey's death was hardly unique as she was one of 2,203 child killings that year. Twenty-one percent of those were

unsolved.

The problem has gotten worse in recent years. Perpetrators were unidentified in 24 percent of child killings committed from 2006 through 2008.

"A lot of them are going unsolved because more and more of these homicides are being committed by strangers or slight acquaintances who break into the house," said Nancy Ruhe, executive director of the National Organization of Parents Of Murdered Children, based in Cincinnati.

Police reports confirm this. Child murders committed by strangers or by persons with unknown relationships to the dead children have been rising, as have deaths associated with juvenile gangs.

MURDER MYSTERIES



SHNS PHOTO BY JON HATCH / THE DAILY CAMERA

Files of evidence and reports from the JonBenet Ramsey investigation rest in a closet in the detectives unit of the Boulder, Colo., Police Department.

The solution rate differs dramatically between teenagers and young children. About 10 percent of killings went unsolved for infants and children up to 4 years old. But the failure rate rose to 29 percent for teenagers 15 to 17.

Police are also significantly less likely to identify killers of racial or ethnic-minority children. Only 13 percent of non-Hispanic white child murders went unsolved, compared to 24 percent of black infants and youths and 27 percent of Hispanic children.

“This is not a race thing, but a class thing. It comes down to whether or not you have money,” Hawkins said. “If a killing happened in Beverly Hills,

I can guarantee that (police) will get to the bottom of it. But if the killing happens in South Central (Los Angeles), they won’t.”

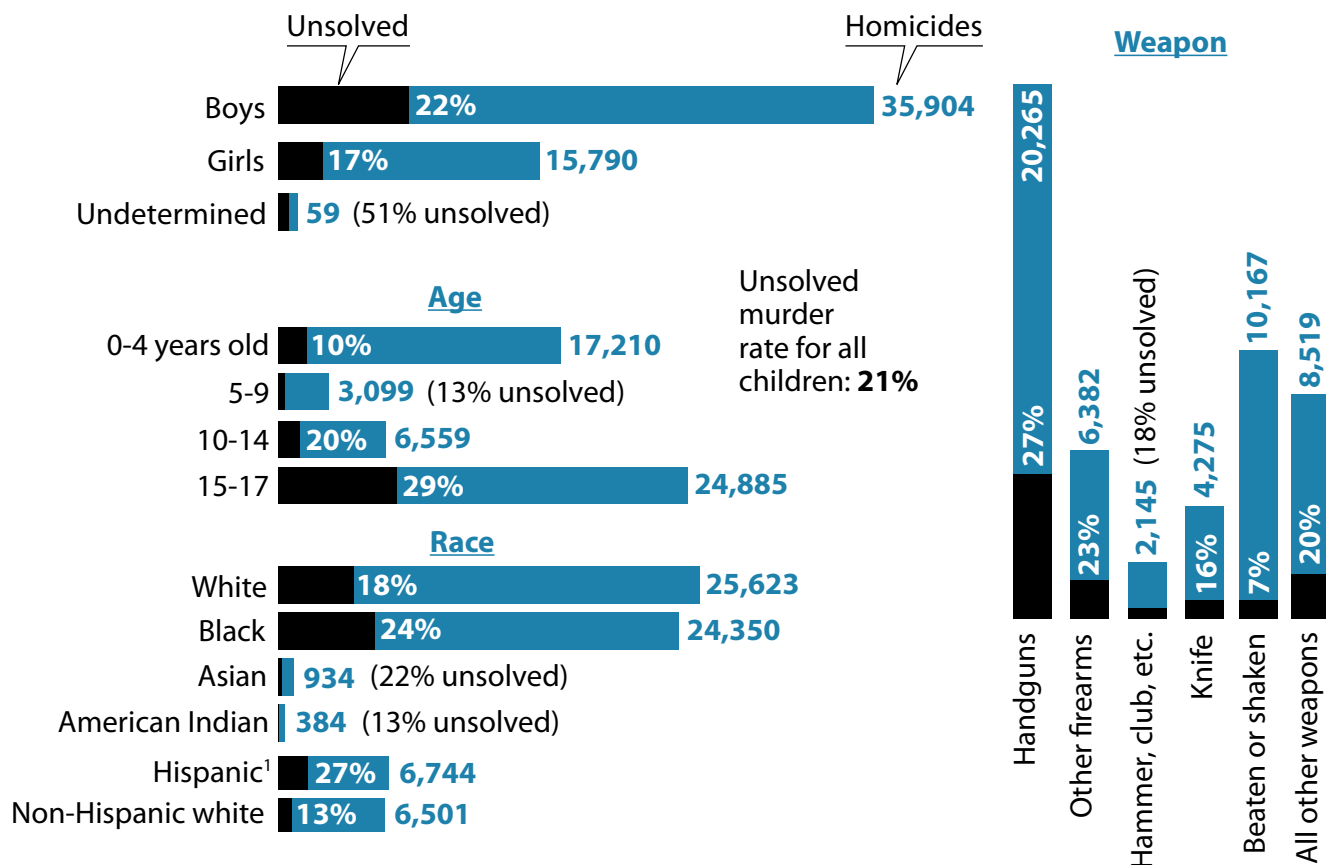
Gender also matters, the study found. Twenty-two percent of the killings of male children went unsolved, compared to 17 percent of female children. Although the difference between genders is much reduced among infants and very young children, the killings of males are consistently less likely to be solved throughout all age groups.

“This country has always had more compassion for the murders of little girls,” Hawkins concluded.

But nothing seems to matter more than geogra-

A look at America's youngest victims

Between 1980 and 2008, 51,753 murders of children and teenagers 17 or younger were reported by police departments.



1 — Rates reported only if police indicated whether victim was Hispanic or non-Hispanic.

Source: Most information was obtained from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report, although some information from Florida and the District of Columbia was obtained by Scripps Howard News Service using Freedom of Information laws.

phy. Just as with adult homicides, child killings are more likely to be solved in some cities and states than others. Worst was the state of New York, where police reported not solving 32 percent of their juvenile homicides. At the other extreme were police in South Carolina and Wyoming, who reported solving all but 5 percent of their cases.

High failure rates in homicide investigations often reflect failures of will by local political leaders to make murder cases a top priority, according to crime experts.

"The one factor that stands out is the leadership of the police department," Wellford said. "If they're committed to clearances, if they make it a priority,

if they provide the resources and demand that their investigators use the best practices, we always see increases in the clearance rates in those communities."

Parents groups in recent years have developed strategies to help police locate child killers.

"We've formed our own cold-case squads. We will call detectives to talk about cases. This keeps the cases in their face," Hawkins said. "And we will go out to the neighborhoods ourselves to post signs. We'll beg people to put up rewards for information. We also help put up billboards. We have to start holding parents, law enforcement and the whole communities accountable."

Mass murder rises as other killings decline

By **THOMAS HARGROVE**
Scripps Howard News Service

The number of Americans who die in horrific acts of multiple and even mass murder have risen in recent years despite an otherwise dramatic decline in homicide rates nationwide.

According to recently released FBI statistics, homicides involving two or more victims rose from 1,360 incidents in 2008 to 1,428 incidents in 2009. That's a 5 percent increase even though homicides, overall, dropped nearly 7 percent.

"This is all part of the economic downturn," concluded retired FBI agent Mark Safarik, who investigated mass murderers at the bureau's Behavioral Analysis Unit at Quantico, Va. "When the economy drops as precipitously as it has in the last few years, many men simply can't stand it. They can't hold a job, they are going into bankruptcy or foreclosure, and they snap."

These crimes with terrifying body counts are somewhat more likely to be solved than single-victim homicides, according to a Scripps Howard News Service study of more than 525,000 homicide records provided by the FBI and local police departments.

Police were able to identify the suspects in 70 percent of all homicide cases. The rate of identification was 71 percent among multiple-victim killings and 78 percent among mass killings.

Data on mass murders for 2009 are not yet avail-

able, but these killings involving four or more victims have been rising slightly in recent years. For the three-year period 2006 to 2008, an annual average of 163 Americans perished in acts of mass killing, up from the annual average of 161 during the 1980s.

The upward trends in multiple and mass murder are in stark contrast to the huge drop in single-victim murder, which has declined more than 40 percent since 1980.

A major reason, experts say, is that mass murders and single-victim murders are committed by very different people.

"Mass murder is different from single-victim murders. They are more likely to be committed by white, middle-aged men," said Northeastern University criminologist Jack Levin, who has published several books on serial and mass killers. "And most mass killers don't kill randomly. They have certain people they blame for all of the problems in their life."

The worst mass killing in 2010 demonstrates the rage many men feel. Omar Thornton killed eight co-workers at a Hartford, Conn., beer distribution warehouse on Aug. 3 when he was forced to resign after surveillance video showed he'd stolen beer from the company. He took his own life as police began swarming the building.

"They treat me bad over here," Thornton told 911 operators shortly before putting a Ruger SR9 semi-automatic pistol to his own head. "So I took it into my own hands and handled the problem. I wish I could

Mass murders in the U.S.

The number of mass murders (four or more victims) reported by police from 1980 to 2008:

State	Incidents	Deaths	State	Incidents	Deaths	State	Incidents	Deaths
Alabama	8	36	Kentucky	8	42	North Dakota	2	8
Alaska	5	29	Louisiana	27	115	Ohio	41	203
Arizona	12	54	Maine	3	12	Oklahoma	14	229
Arkansas	12	56	Maryland	20	93	Oregon	7	30
California	118	565	Massachusetts	10	57	Pennsylvania	49	234
Colorado	9	44	Michigan	52	229	Rhode Island	1	6
Connecticut	16	83	Minnesota	8	37	South Carolina	15	71
Delaware	2	8	Mississippi	6	26	South Dakota	2	8
D.C.	0	0	Missouri	21	100	Tennessee	20	94
Florida	62	279	Montana	1	4	Texas	78	363
Georgia	17	77	Nebraska	3	13	Utah	9	49
Hawaii	2	10	Nevada	6	35	Vermont	5	23
Idaho	4	17	New Hampshire	3	12	Virginia	26	130
Illinois	39	181	New Jersey	25	125	Washington	15	73
Indiana	27	116	New Mexico	4	20	West Virginia	9	44
Iowa	5	26	New York	84	441	Wisconsin	9	47
Kansas	6	30	North Carolina	22	93	Wyoming	2	8
			United States		965			4,685

Source: Most information was obtained from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report, although some information from Florida and the District of Columbia was obtained by Scripps Howard News Service using Freedom of Information laws

have gotten more people.”

That sense of remorseless vengeance echoed in Oklahoma City federal building bomber Timothy McVeigh, who in 1995 killed 168 people in America's deadliest domestic act of terrorism.

“I am sorry these people had to lose their lives. But that's the nature of the beast,” McVeigh said in a 2001 letter to The Buffalo (N.Y.) News. He was lashing out at what he believed were tyrannical policies of the federal government.

From 1980 to 2008, at least 4,685 people have perished in 965 reported incidents of mass murder involving at least four fatalities committed during the same incident. Multiple homicides involving at least two victims took 44,163 lives in 19,568 incidents.

In cases in which police identify the offender, 49 percent of the perpetrators in single-victim homicides were whites, while whites accounted for 61 percent of mass homicides. Blacks account for 49 percent of

single-victim killings and 35 percent of mass killings.

The victims of mass murder tend to be a cross section of the U.S. population. About 70 percent of mass murder victims are white, compared to only 50 percent of victims of single-person killings. Women accounted for more than 40 percent of mass murder victims, up from about 20 percent of single-victim killings.

The study was based on records obtained from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report, a voluntary program in which not all police departments participate.

Using local Freedom of Information Act laws, Scripps Howard obtained 15,322 detailed records of homicides that were not reported to the FBI from police departments in Florida and the District of Columbia.

These additional records included 37 mass killings of 165 people and 793 multiple killings of 1,786 people that were not reported to federal authorities.

MURDER MYSTERIES



SHNS PHOTO BY RICHARD BRIAN

Mortuary workers and members of the Clark County, Nev., Coroner's Office remove the lid of a vault as they exhume the body of an unidentified woman in Las Vegas in 2010. The coroner's office exhumed the body as part of a Department of Justice-funded DNA project, which tries to identify deceased people through modern DNA technology.

AMERICA'S POLICE DEPARTMENTS REACT

Serial killings study prompts police to launch investigations

By **THOMAS HARGROVE**
Scripps Howard News Service

Authorities in Indiana and Ohio have launched investigations into suspected serial killings after a Scripps Howard News Service study of FBI computer files found many alarming clusters of unsolved homicides of women across the nation.

Also, police in Nevada confirm for the first time that they are hunting a likely serial killer who has targeted up to seven women, mostly prostitutes, and has scattered their partial remains across three states.

Many of the suspected serial killings detected in the study have never before been disclosed to the public.

All told, authorities in seven cities have confirmed that a statistical analysis of federal crime files conducted by Scripps has detected known – or strongly suspected – serial homicides in their communities.

The study was based upon computer records of

525,742 homicides committed from 1980 to 2008. The FBI provided most of the data. But Scripps supplemented these using the Freedom of Information Act to obtain detailed records of 15,322 killings that local police did not disclose to the federal government's entirely voluntary crime reporting system.

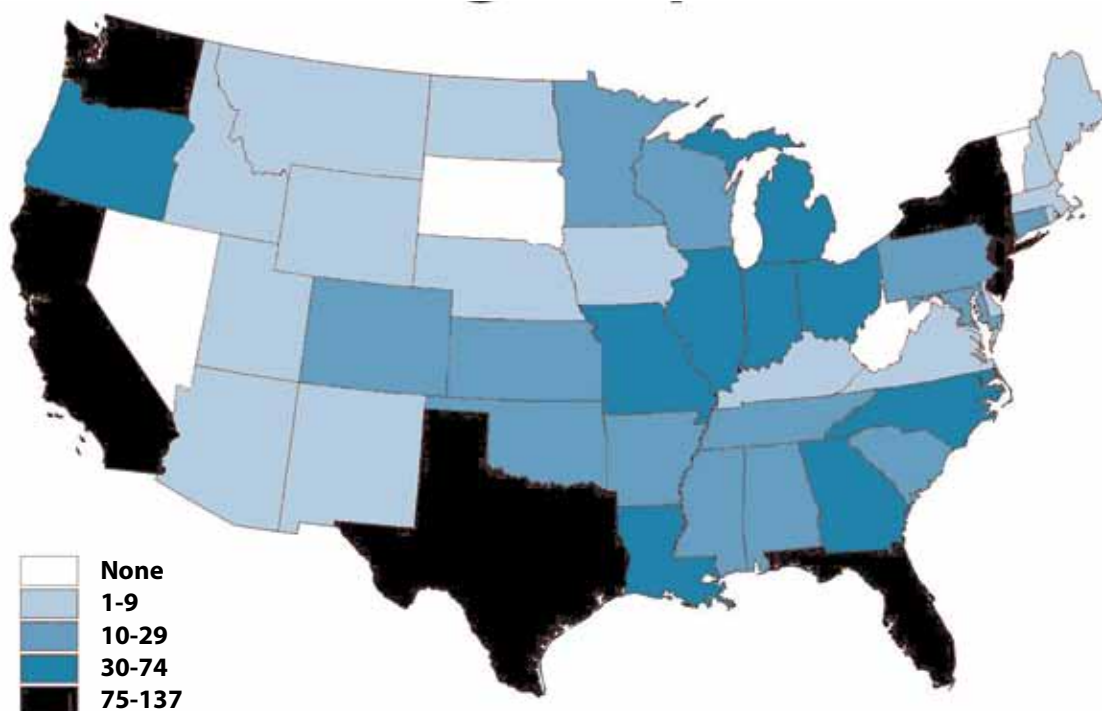
The resulting database – which crime experts say is the most complete accounting of homicide victims ever assembled in the United States – was created to determine if serial killings could be identified among the nation's nearly 185,000 unsolved homicides.

"I remember we had three of them, all elderly women who were strangled," said Lake County, Ind., Deputy Coroner Jackie DeChantal of a series of unsolved killings about four years ago in the Gary, Ind., area. "I remember talking about it then. We couldn't get anyone else to say that they were connected."

DeChantal has since reviewed coroner's case files and added three more suspicious homicides to a list of

Serial killings reported to FBI

An FBI report locates 1,398 known victims of serial killers as recorded in the bureau's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) computer database. This list includes all serial homicide victims reported to the FBI by local police officials since 1985, but should not be considered a complete count of actual serial killings.



Alabama	22	Louisiana	40	Ohio	32
Alaska	1	Maine	4	Oklahoma	23
Arizona	9	Maryland	11	Oregon	37
Arkansas	16	Massachusetts	7	Pennsylvania	28
California	128	Michigan	47	Rhode Island	4
Colorado	19	Minnesota	22	South Carolina	12
Connecticut	10	Mississippi	10	South Dakota	0
Delaware	6	Missouri	46	Tennessee	24
Washington D.C.	20	Montana	3	Texas	97
Florida	112	Nebraska	3	Utah	8
Georgia	39	Nevada	0	Vermont	0
Hawaii	3	New Hampshire	1	Virginia	8
Idaho	5	New Jersey	85	Washington	95
Illinois	74	New Mexico	3	West Virginia	0
Indiana	41	New York	137	Wisconsin	21
Iowa	1	North Carolina	43	Wyoming	1
Kansas	24	North Dakota	2	Other nations	9
Kentucky	5				

Source: Data provided by the FBI under a special request from Scripps Howard News Service. The Justice Department currently defines a serial killer as someone who kills two or more persons in separate incidents.

14 strangulations identified in the Scripps study, some dating back to the early 1990s. She plans to review the cases with investigators from the Gary Police Department.

"We thought it was just odd when they happened," she said. "Why would you kill somebody old like that, unless you were robbing them? But that didn't appear to be the case at the time."

The Scripps study also prompted police in Youngstown, Ohio, to begin a fresh review of decades-old files and evidence storage boxes related to several homicides.

"In the early 1990s, we thought we had a serial murderer running around. Yes, we definitely thought we had one," said Capt. Rod Foley of the city's homicide squad.

Foley is contacting other police departments, looking for any physical evidence from a series of suspected rape-murders in his area that could be shipped to Ohio authorities for DNA analysis.

"We had a suspect back then," Foley said. "We thought he had a pattern. He would rape them. Sometimes he'd shoot them or do some other things to them."

The Scripps study highlighted communities where police failed to solve at least three-quarters of the homicides of women who were of similar age and killed through similar methods. The study focused on women because officials at the FBI's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program report that 70 percent of all known serial murder victims were female.

The study identified 161 clusters in which 1,247 women of similar age were killed through similar means. At least 75 percent of the cases in each cluster were unsolved at the time they were reported under the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report program.

"No one has done what you have done," said Uni-

versity of Maryland criminologist Charles Wellford, who in 1999 published a landmark study into how police can improve murder investigations.

Nevertheless, experts warn that the Scripps study is unlikely to detect mobile serial killers like homicidal truck drivers, a group that was targeted in the FBI's Highway Serial Killings Initiative.

"Your method is fine, but it certainly underestimates the true number of serial killings," said criminologist Jack Levin, co-director of the Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict at Northeastern University and a nationally prominent scholar of serial and mass murder.

He said the problem is that serial killers often vary

"You start to realize that there are a lot of these people (serial killers) out there. One's bad. But to know that there are dozens or possibly even more ... The general public has no idea."

Mike Jennings,
Las Vegas Police Department special agent

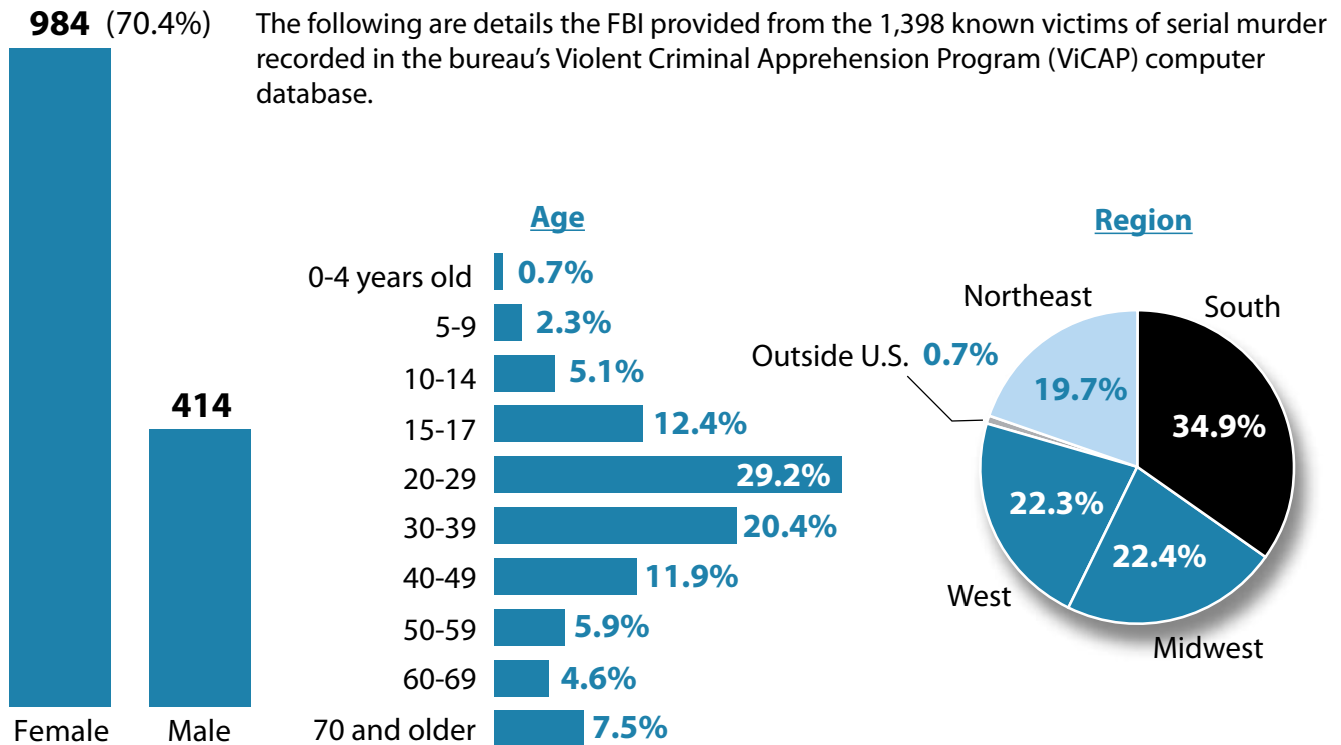
their methods and even their choice of victims, which makes detection more difficult. "They get bored," Levin said.

Contained in one of the study's four clusters of unsolved female killings in Las Vegas was the grisly death of Misty Saens, a prostitute whose torso was discovered off Nevada Route 159 west of Las Vegas in March 2003. It took police two years to identify her.

It took even longer for police to discover that Saens was the first victim in an apparent sequence of gruesome killings.

"We have a series of cases where we believe six or seven women, mostly prostitutes, have been killed in southern Nevada and other places, possibly by a truck

A look at serial murder victims



Source: Data provided by the FBI under a special request from Scripps Howard News Service. The Justice Department currently defines a serial killer as someone who kills two or more persons in separate incidents. Note: Exact age was unavailable on seven victims, so percentages reflect the 1,391 victims with precise ages available.

driver,” said Lt. Lew Roberts of the Las Vegas Homicide Unit. “We think we have one serial killer who’s out preying on these women.”

That statement – given after Scripps asked Las Vegas authorities if they had active serial killer investigations – is the first time Las Vegas police have said publicly they are hunting a serial killer who targets prostitutes. The city has never issued a formal warning, although local news media published and broadcast stories in 2008 speculating the possibility of a serial killer.

The U.S. Justice Department, as a policy, recommends that police issue a warning when a serial killer has been detected.

“If we determine that there may be a serial killer operating and that a certain population therefore is

at risk, then, certainly, warning the public is of paramount concern,” said Supervisory Special Agent Mark Hilt of the FBI’s Behavioral Analysis Unit, which specializes in profiling serial killers.

But he said the final decision rests with local law enforcement.

“We don’t have a policy on this,” said Las Vegas police public information officer Barbara Morgan. “We want to be transparent on cases of serial rapists or serial murderers, of course. But I can’t remember ever putting out a statement about an active serial killer.”

Police will not identify all of the killings, or disappearances, which they suspect could be the work of a single person targeting Las Vegas prostitutes. In late September, they issued a statement to Scripps about two related cases: police in 2003 recovered the torso

of Jodi Brewer near Interstate 15 in San Bernardino County, Calif., and in 2005 found the severed legs of Lindsay Harris, later identified through DNA analysis, along Interstate 55 south of Springfield, Ill.

The Scripps study flagged Brewer's killing among a cluster of 14 homicides of women who the FBI reported were of "unknown age" killed by "type unknown weapons" in the San Bernardino area. None of those cases was solved at the time they were reported to federal authorities.

"It's my understanding that she (Brewer) was strictly a body dump," said Jodi Miller, spokeswoman for the San Bernardino County Sheriff. "We have a lot of desolate highways here. A couple of times a year, people will come upon a body that we determine was not actually killed in our jurisdiction."

Harris' case has prompted the Illinois State Police to look "at almost every highly publicized case from here to Las Vegas involving dismembered bodies," said Mike Jennings, a special agent with the force.

"You start to realize that there are a lot of these people (serial killers) out there. One's bad. But to know that there are dozens or possibly even more ... The general public has no idea."

The study failed to detect Harris' case because Illinois state authorities do not participate in the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report, although the Chicago Police Department has chosen to report directly to the federal agency.

Scripps Howard, in the early stages of the study, filed a Freedom of Information Act request with Illinois State Police seeking disclosure of the missing homicide records. The state denied the request on the grounds that the information does not exist because Illinois does not assemble computer files detailing murder victims.

Similar requests of authorities in Florida and Washington, D.C., were successful, however.

Police confirmed the Scripps study has correctly

identified previously known serial murder victims in Anchorage, Alaska, Buffalo, N.Y., Los Angeles and Seattle. The study flagged 32 of so-called "Green River Killer" Gary Leon Ridgway's estimated 48 victims in Seattle.

The study identified possible cases of serial killings of women in Detroit, Phoenix or Dallas, but police could not confirm these.

The Detroit Police Department refused a Freedom of Information Act request by Scripps Howard for information about 10 unsolved strangulations of teenage girls and women of undetermined age who were killed from 1991 to 2000.

Since Detroit didn't use computers to track homicides until 2003, reviews of older cases would require a "manual search of all homicide files" that would probably include travel to an "off-site storage facility," according to Detroit city counsel Ellen Ha.

Phoenix police did review 11 homicides of women flagged by the Scripps study, but found no evidence that any were the result of serial murder. However, the city also has about 1,900 unsolved homicides committed since 1990 and is building its own database to search for possible serial killings.

"We have renewed our interest in cold-case investigations," said Lt. Joe Knott, head of the city's homicide unit. "We don't have any specific cases tied to any one individual, but that doesn't mean that there may not be."

The study found six clusters of mostly unsolved killings of 74 women in the Dallas area. Although none was easily identified to be a serial homicide, city police are quick to admit that undetected serial killings are likely among the city's more than 350 unsolved killings of women.

"We've had some horrendous murders here," said Sgt. Larry Lewis of the Dallas Cold Case Homicide Unit. "I'm sure there are serial killers in that pile, but I'm trying to figure out a way to find them."

Most serial killing victims are women, FBI reports

By **THOMAS HARGROVE**
Scripps Howard News Service

America's serial killers prey on women — to an extent only hinted at by Hollywood films and best-selling novels.

According to never-before-released FBI data, women accounted for 70 percent of the 1,398 known victims of serial killers since 1985. By comparison, women represented only 22 percent of total homicide victims.

The FBI's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP), based in Quantico, Va., released the data at the request of Scripps Howard News Service. SHNS is conducting an investigation into the nation's nearly 185,000 unsolved homicides committed from 1980 through 2008.

According to the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report, local police reported that about 33,000 homicides of women remain unsolved.

FBI agent Mark Hilts, head of the bureau's Behavioral Analysis Unit No. 2, which profiles serial killers, said "a large number" of serial killers act with a sexual motive.

"Sex can be a motivation, but it's a motivation in conjunction with something else — with anger, with power, with control," Hilts said. "Most serial killers do derive satisfaction from the act of killing, and that's what differentiates them" from those who kill to help commit or conceal another crime.

Crime experts for decades have tried to define serial murder and to determine its causes and moti-

vations. The Justice Department currently defines a serial killer simply as someone who kills two or more people in separate incidents, a definition that ignores the issue of motive.

The Justice Department for years has estimated that less than 1 percent of all homicides are committed by serial killers, but that assumption has come under question recently.

Retired FBI agent Mark Safarik, a veteran serial killer hunter, discounts the official definition of serial murder.

"Serial murder is more related to motive. We use a definition of two or more, but that's really just for research purposes," said Safarik, now of Forensic Behavioral Services International, a legal consultant firm based in Fredericksburg, Va. "For us, there is almost always some sort of sexual component to the homicide."

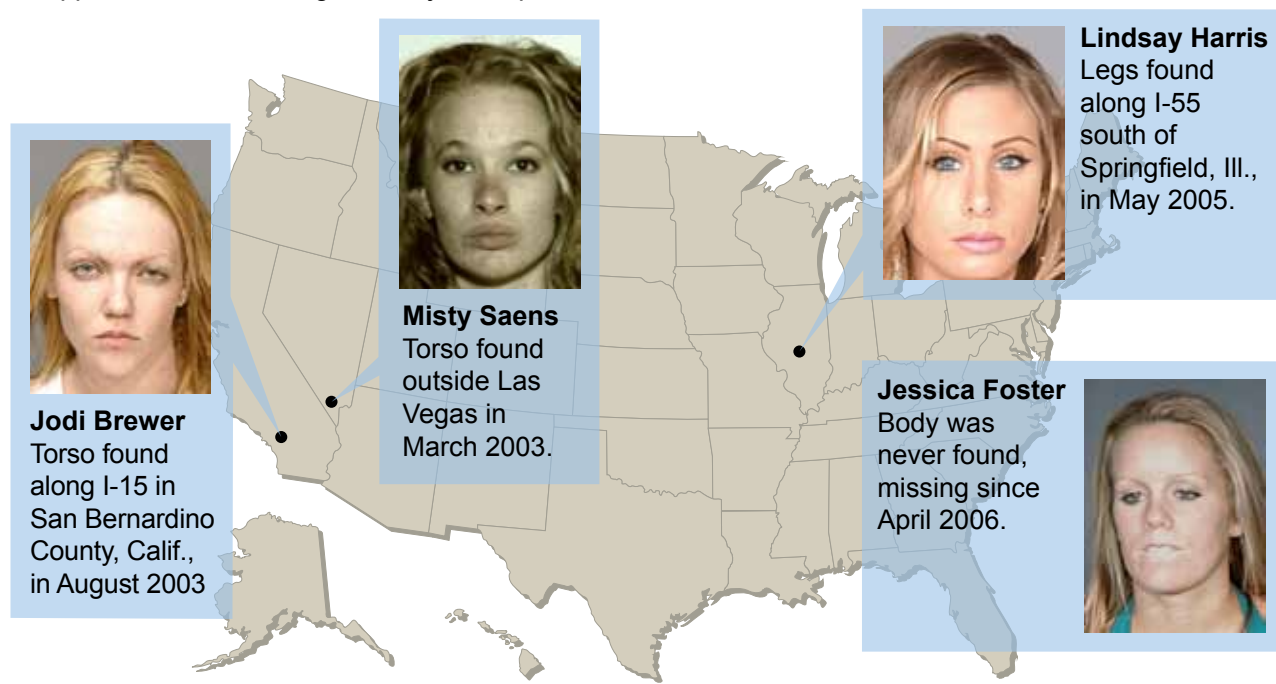
The FBI has been compiling victim data for 25 years. They also released information showing that nearly half of the victims of known serial homicides were in their 20s and 30s, although people of every age and from every region of the country have been victims.

"We look at homicides and attempted homicides. We look at sexual assaults. We look at unidentified human-remains cases where homicide is suspected," said Special Agent Michael Harrigan, who headed ViCAP from 2007 to 2010 and agreed to release the data.

"We catalog this in a database ... to try to identify serial killers or serial offenders that transcend jurisdictional boundaries."

Serial Killer Preys on Las Vegas Prostitutes

Las Vegas police reported these four women are of “similar background and appearance.” All were 19 to 26 years old, were 5-foot-4 to 5-foot-6 inches tall, worked at higher-end Las Vegas hotels and disappeared while working “on the job” as prostitutes.



SOURCE: Scripps Howard News Service research

Chris Campbell / SHNS GRAPHIC

Among states, New York leads in a grim statistic: It has had 137 victims of serial murder since 1985. California has had 128 and Florida 112.

When shown the FBI data, criminologists and veteran homicide investigators asked why New York leads the nation. Does it lead because it has more serial killings or because it does a better job in detecting such killings?

“That surprises me. I thought the numbers would always be higher in California and some of the Southern states,” said retired veteran New York City homicide detective Augustine “Gus” Papay.

California, with its immense population, ought to lead in every major crime statistic, Papay said. And he felt Southern states would be overrepresented because of recently documented highway serial killings by Southern truckers.

Papay was a key participant in the successful hunt

for Alejandro “Alex” Henriquez, convicted in 1992 of murdering a woman and two girls, including 10-year-old Jessica Guzman.

Papay said serial killers may be drawn to a major metropolitan area like New York City.

“They think it’s easier to get lost in the big city. And think of all the victims! There are all sorts of different people here they could target,” Papay said. “And maybe they think it will be harder to get caught here.”

Calculated by population, the state of Washington leads the nation with 1.6 serial homicides per 100,000 people. But that is almost entirely due to Gary Leon Ridgway, Seattle’s so-called “Green River Killer.” He was convicted in 2003 of strangling 48 women and teenage girls, often prostitutes or hitchhikers he picked up. Washington showed 95 serial killings overall.

MURDER MYSTERIES



SHNS PHOTO BY RANDY TOBIAS / WICHITA EAGLE TRIBUNE

Lt. Ken Landwehr jokes with reporters during a press conference on Saturday, Feb. 26, 2005, announcing the arrest of the BTK killer, Dennis Rader. Wichita, Kan., Police Chief Norman Williams is in the background.

Were serial killings in Wichita a plague or due to better detection?

By THOMAS HARGROVE
Scripps Howard News Service

Police in Wichita, Kan., like to joke that the chief of their homicide squad has serial killers on the brain.

"I get accused of that a lot by my detectives, that everything and everyone is a serial killer," said Lt. Ken Landwehr. "But that's exactly where my training started. It's one of the first things to look at if you have a sexually motivated homicide."

Folks in Wichita, like Landwehr, have reason to be paranoid. The Midwestern metropolitan area of about 589,000 residents has been plagued by at least four – and Landwehr suspects five – serial killers in recent decades.

Landwehr, 56, spent much of his career chasing one of the world's most infamous serial killers, self-proclaimed "BTK killer" Dennis Rader, who bragged to the news media that he had bound, tortured and killed 10 residents of Sedgwick County, Kan., from 1974 to 1991.

Landwehr led the task force that captured Rader in 2005 by recovering deleted files on a computer diskette on which Rader had documented his murders. The files led police to a computer owned by the Christ

Lutheran Church of Wichita where Rader had served as president of the church council.

During the 21-year search for the BTK killer, Wichita detectives also helped arrest and prosecute two other serial killers – Richard Grissom, convicted of killing three women in Kansas and Missouri, and James Cromwell, convicted of strangling two elderly Wichita women.

In addition, city homicide detectives worked two killings of women at a local bridal shop attributed to the still-at-large "I-70 killer." The killer officially has been linked through laboratory gunshot analysis to the slayings of six people found during a two-month period in 1992 near the interstate highway in Kansas, Indiana and Missouri.

And Landwehr suspects his town had a fifth serial killer, who he thinks was responsible for the disappearances of two women in the 1990s.

Perversely, the intense notoriety that the BTK killings brought Wichita may have been a brutal blessing. The city's homicide detectives are less likely to fall victim to so-called "pattern blindness" – the reluctance by police to recognize and acknowledge they are chasing a serial killer.

"You've got to look to see if the guy was doing this

for the first time,” Landwehr said. “You pattern yourself to look at that (serial killing) as a distinct possibility rather than to avoid it, which is something we’ve historically done in the past. We avoid things like that.”

Criminologists who’ve studied serial killers agree. The apparent plague of serial killers in Wichita may actually provide a clue to how common they are.

“It shouldn’t come as a surprise than an all-American city like Wichita would have a few, maybe several, unsolved serial killings over the last three decades. My guess is that this is not unusual,” said Northeastern University criminologist Jack Levin, who has published several statistical studies of multiple and serial killers. “Having a notorious serial killer like BTK would certainly sensitize detectives to the possibility of serial killers. That might actually have given them an advantage for avoiding what we call linkage blindness.”

Wichita had at least 11 strangulations of women since 1980 recorded in the FBI’s Supplementary Homicide Report program, according to a Scripps Howard News Service analysis. Most were committed in the 1980s.

“I haven’t a clue why” there were so many asphyxial killings, Landwehr said. “It’s been mostly guns, blunt-force trauma and knives since 2000.”

He doubts anyone was copying Rader’s style.

“We have never had anyone who ever confessed or talked after their arrest who said they were patterning themselves after BTK,” Landwehr said.

Meanwhile, Wichita police still have unsolved cases like the I-70 killer and the mysterious disappearance of two local women.

“We’ll have to get lucky with someone talking in prison. Or maybe we’ll get some newfound technology and we can go back over our evidence and finally get somewhere,” Landwehr said. “We just have to wait and hope that we’ll find something.”

How many unsolved murders are serial?

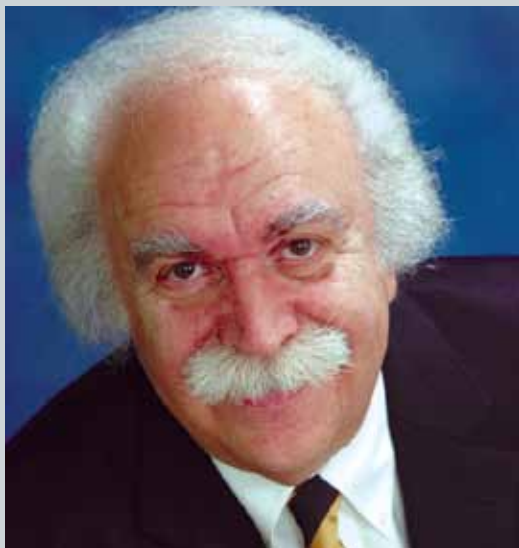
By **THOMAS HARGROVE**
Scripps Howard News Service

Just how common is serial murder in America?

“Serial murder is a relatively rare event, estimated to comprise less than 1 percent of all murders committed in any given year,” supervisors at the FBI’s famed Behavioral Analysis Unit concluded in their published summary of a 2005 symposium the bureau sponsored in San Antonio.

That little-known but historically important gathering attracted 135 veteran homicide investigators, scholars and government crime experts.

The group reached an important agreement that serial murder should be defined as “the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender in separate events.” Until then, there was no consensus on how many deaths were required for a



"It is hard for police to admit they have a serial killer on the loose since it terrifies the public. After all, serial killers are the most successful kind of killer. They frequently stay on the loose for months, years or even decades."

Jack Levin,

Co-director of Northeastern University's
Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict

series of homicides to qualify.

Several participants at that meeting said the broad definition — which they believe certainly encompasses more than 1 percent of all homicides — was adopted out of concern that serial killings are often overlooked by police.

"We underestimate the prevalence of serial murder," concluded Jack Levin, co-director of Northeastern University's Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict and a national expert on serial killing. "It is hard for police to admit they have a serial killer on the loose since it terrifies the public. After all, serial killers are the most successful kind of killer. They frequently stay on the loose for months, years or even decades."

The FBI reports it has 1,398 cases of known serial homicides among the more than 60,000 homicides reported since 1985 to its Violent Criminal Apprehension Program in Quantico, Va. That figure represents more than 2 percent of the homicides on file with the bureau.

Veteran FBI agents who've participated in serial killer investigations agree there are many unsolved — and even undetected — serial killings among the nation's growing pile of cold-case homicides.

"We would be fooling ourselves to think that we've been able to identify every serial killer," said Bill Hagmaier, former chief of the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime. "We have to attribute a lot of the unsolved cases to successful predatory killers, some of whom are proficient serial killers. That's simply the way it is."

And there's agreement that even the official definition of serial killing is inadequate.

"You can have a contract killer who's killed five or six people or a gang enforcer, but those for us are not really serial murders. They do fit the definition. But they are motivated by devotion to a gang or love of money," said retired FBI profiler Mark Safarik.

"But we are talking about guys who are murdering people, mostly women, over long periods of time. There is a sexual piece to these crimes. That makes them different animals to guys who belong to a gang or who are involved in drug-related killings."

"The big question is how many serial murderers are active at any one time?" Safarik said. "It depends on who you ask. My best guess is that there are up to two dozen offenders who are active now."

FBI hopes computers can help catch serial killers

By **THOMAS HARGROVE**
Scripps Howard News Service

QUANTICO, Va. — FBI agents are trying to teach computers how to spot serial killers, enlisting artificial intelligence to identify patterns in the nation's growing number of unsolved homicides.

The process — called automated case matching — is the brainchild of a small cadre of crime researchers at the bureau's famed Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (or ViCAP) housed in a row of unmarked office buildings near the Quantico Marine Training Base south of Washington, D.C.

Federal authorities hope computers can sift

through more than 60,000 unsolved homicides currently in ViCAP records, looking for common clues that would link one killer to multiple crimes. Detectives nationwide log 3,000 new killings of the roughly 6,000 unsolved cases each year into the system to discover if their homicides are similar to killings in other areas.

"It's very hard for an analyst to go through all of those cases since there are so many facets to them," said FBI Special Agent Michael Harrigan, who led the ViCAP program from 2007 to 2010. "We need a tool that can run behind the scenes and continuously try to match cases."

A less-sophisticated version of the matching tool,

Top serial killer myths the FBI wants to correct

The FBI — in its publication "Serial Murder: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives for Investigators" — provided these common misconceptions about serial killers following a national symposium on serial killers that met Aug. 29 through Sept. 2, 2005, in San Antonio:

Myth
Serial killers are all dysfunctional loners.

Fact: The majority of serial killers are not reclusive, social misfits who live alone. They are not monsters and may not appear strange. Many serial killers hide in plain sight within their communities. Serial murderers often have families and homes, are gainfully employed and appear to be normal members of the community. Because many serial murderers can blend in so effortlessly, they are often overlooked by law enforcement and the public.



SHNS photo by Jason Bartz

Special Agent Michael Harrigan supervised the FBI's Highway Serial Killings Initiative at the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) in Quantico, Va. The initiative has identified more than 500 likely serial killings attributed to about 200 different killers.

Myth
Serial killers are all white males.

Fact: Contrary to popular belief, serial killers span all racial groups. There are white, African-American, Hispanic and Asian serial killers. The racial diversification of serial killers generally mirrors that of the overall U.S. population. (Editor's note: It is true that most serial killers, like murderers in general, are men.)

Myth
Serial killers are only motivated by sex.

Fact: All serial murders are not sexually based. There are many other motivations for serial murders including anger, thrill, financial gain and attention seeking.

Myth
All serial killers are insane or are evil geniuses.

Fact: Another myth that exists is that serial killers have either a debilitating mental condition, or they are extremely clever and intelligent. As a group, serial killers suffer from a variety of personality disorders, including psychopathy, anti-social personality and others. Most, however, are not adjudicated as insane under the law.

MURDER MYSTERIES

developed a decade ago, failed to produce any significant leads. FBI officials decided to try again in 2008.

“We are redesigning it from top to bottom, using new techniques and new research methods to make sure it’s more accurate than the old one. We’re going to put some AI – artificial intelligence – into it,” Harrigan said.

The ViCAP database contains 1,398 known serial murders, 187 cases of attempted murder committed by serial killers and 737 serial sexual assaults. Analysts are testing their automated search algorithms against these documented cases of serial crimes.

It’s a daunting task.

Detectives may report that a woman was strangled with her own stockings. Or they may describe the murder weapon as “hosiery” or “nylons.” A human would immediately draw a comparison in the similar descriptions of murder weapons, but computers must be taught that objects often have many different names.

FBI analysts hope to teach computers to compare abstract concepts such as the time of day when murders are committed, whether crime scenes are geographically similar and located near common objects like bridges or major roads, or whether offenders in cases of attempted murder or rape speak to their vic-

tims using similar phrases or ideas.

Federal officials hope to deploy the next-generation automated matching system before the end of 2010.

They are, in essence, trying to teach machines to do what Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation analyst Terri Turner did in 2003 when she received a report that the nude body of an unidentified middle-aged woman bound with duct tape was found along an on-ramp to Interstate 40 in eastern Oklahoma.

“Because the victim was unidentified and because of the nature of the crime, it is normal to put out a Teletype about it to surrounding states,” Turner said. “Within 72 hours, we got a number of responses. But two, in particular, were notable.”

The body along I-40 was eventually identified as Sandra Beard, 43, a truck stop prostitute. The bodies of two other women -- Margaret Gardner, 47, and Jennifer Hyman, 24, both prostitutes -- were found in similar circumstances and later linked to Beard’s killing through forensic evidence.

Turner’s ability to correctly link three different roadside killings made police reconsider previous notions that serial killers prefer to operate in a fixed geography. The discovery led the FBI to create the Highway Serial Killings Initiative, which documented

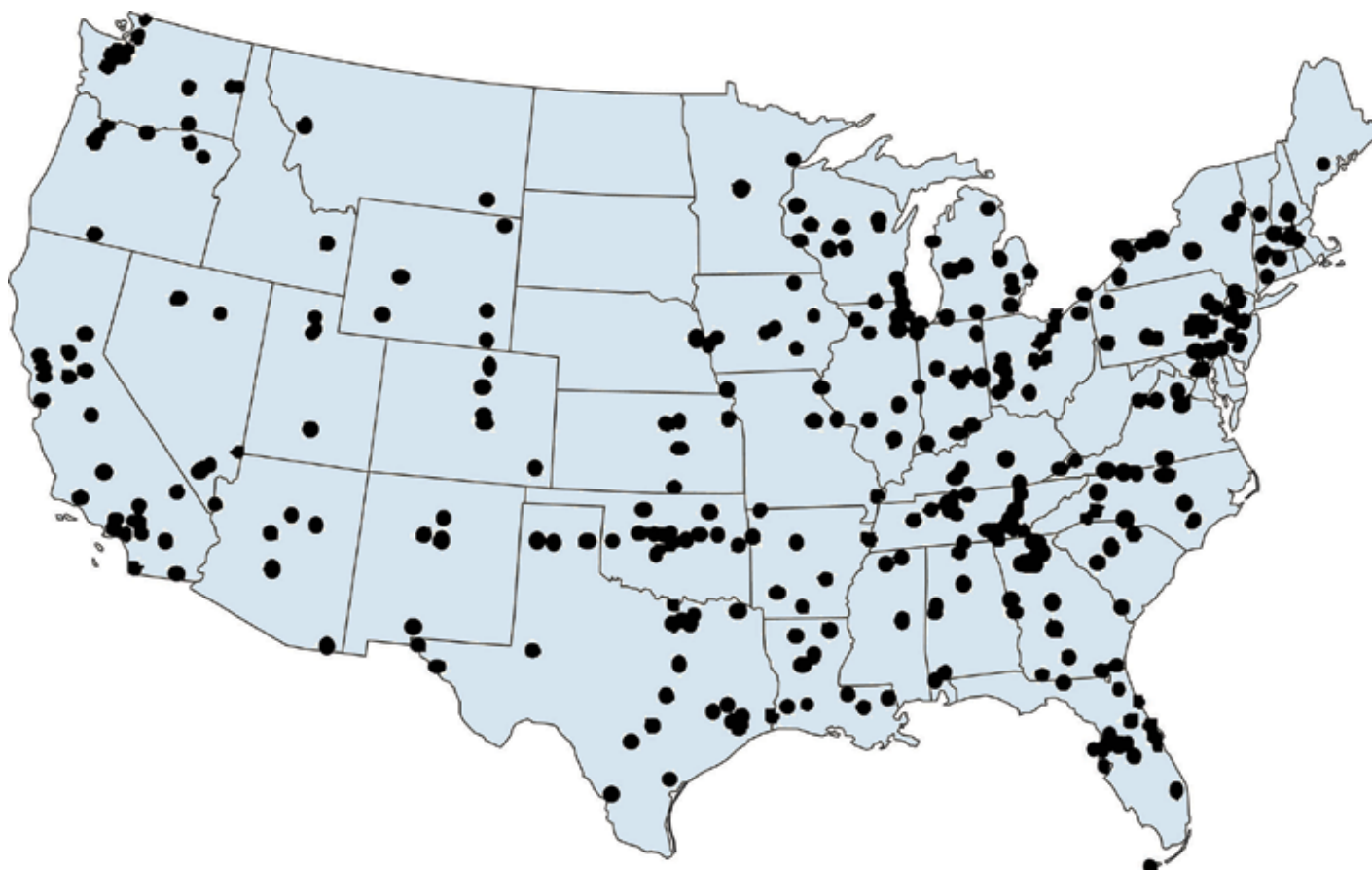
Myth
All serial murderers travel and operate interstate.

Fact: Most serial killers have very defined geographic areas of operation. They conduct their killings within comfort zones that are often defined by an anchor point (e.g., place of residence, employment or residence of a relative). Serial murderers will, at times, spiral their activities outside of their comfort zone, when their confidence has grown through experience or to avoid detection. Very few serial murderers travel interstate to kill.

Myth
Serial killers want to get caught.

Where serial murders have been committed

The FBI's Highway Serial Killings Initiative has detected more than 500 serial murders. The bureau is using computers to help them spot serial killings in the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program database.



Sources: FBI, Wikimedia Commons
By Jason Bartz/SHNS

Fact: Offenders committing a crime for the first time are inexperienced. They gain experience and confidence with each new offense, eventually succeeding with few mistakes or problems.

While most serial killers plan their offenses more thoroughly than other criminals, the learning curve is still very steep. They must select, target, approach, control and dispose of their victims. The logistics involved in committing a murder and disposing of the body can become very complex, especially when

there are multiple sites involved.

As serial killers continue to offend without being captured, they can become empowered, feeling they will never be identified. As the series continues, the killers may begin to take shortcuts when committing their crimes. This often causes the killers to take more chances, leading to identification by law enforcement. It is not that serial killers want to get caught; they feel that they can't get caught.

MURDER MYSTERIES

"We would be remiss not take advantage of a computer's ability to flag cases that show similarities. And, yes, I think it can work."

Terri Turner
Oklahoma State
Bureau of Investigation
analyst



SHNS photo provided by Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation

more than 500 unsolved homicides of victims found dead along major highways. At least 200 different killers are believed responsible.

Although the three killings that Turner linked seven years ago are still unsolved, at least 10 arrests have been credited to the Highway Serial Killings Initiative, including recent guilty pleas by North Carolina trucker Adam Leroy Lane, who confessed to fatal stabbings of two women in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Turner, now a member of the ViCAP advisory board, supports the attempt to automate the search for serial killers. "We would be remiss not to take advantage of a computer's ability to flag cases that show similarities," she said. "And, yes, I think it can work."

Criminologist Jack Levin, co-director of the Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict at Northeastern University, said the FBI's attempts to use computers to track serial killers are worth trying. But he sees several limitations.

"The first is missing data," Levin said.

A study by Scripps Howard News Service found

that nearly 185,000 homicides have gone unsolved since 1980, based upon data provided by the FBI and other Justice Department sources. But local police have reported only 60,000 homicides to ViCAP in the FBI's totally voluntary program. "That's only about a third," Levin said.

Even more serious is the underlining assumption that serial killers will stick to patterns "both in their victims' characteristics as well as in their methods of killing," Levin said. "But we know many killers will have neither. We find that their methods often change from victim to victim."

For example, the Hillside Stranglers, Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono, exclusively targeted female victims during the late 1970s in the hills above Los Angeles.

"They got bored just strangling their victims, so they started to torture them first," Levin said. "Sometimes killers will change their modus operandi (method of operating) because they get bored. Also, frankly, it is practical. They want to throw the police off who are looking for a pattern."



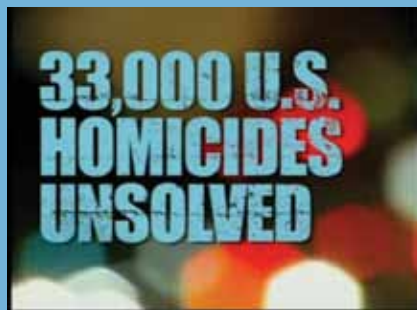
SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

Making news around America

WFTS TAMPA, FLA.



KNXV PHOENIX



Making news around America



SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

WEWS CLEVELAND



"A 5 On Your Side investigation found one in three killers is getting away with murder ..."

KSHB KANSAS CITY, MO.



KJRH TULSA, OKLA.



WXYZ DETROIT



"... The national average for closing homicide cases is about 61%. So why is Detroit's so low? For starters ..."

WCPO CINCINNATI



KNXV PHOENIX

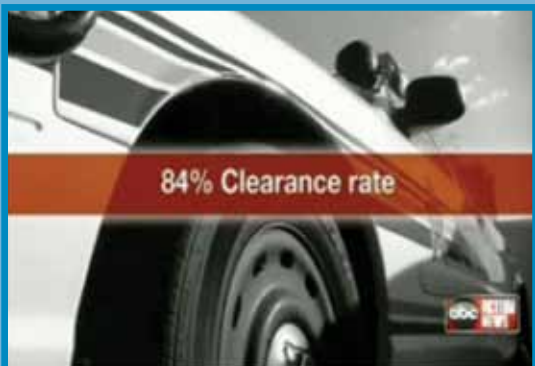


"Hundreds of killers are still on Valley streets, leaving the families of murder victims to wait for justice ..."

WMAR BALTIMORE



WFTS TAMPA



"... the Polk County Sheriff's Department achieved the second-most-improved murder clearance rate in the nation ..."

WPTV WEST PALM BEACH, FLA.



Editorial

Killers don't have to get away with it

Americans are getting away with murder, about 6,000 of them a year. Nearly 185,000 killings from 1980 to 2008 are unsolved.

Despite advances in DNA techniques, forensic science and computers, the national clearance rate for murder and manslaughter cases has fallen from about 90 percent in the 1960s to below 65 percent, according to a Scripps Howard News Service study of crime records provided by the FBI.

Experts told SHNS reporter Thomas Hargrove that murders are tougher to solve because crimes of passion, where the killer is often known to the victim, have been replaced by drug- and gang-related killings where witnesses are reluctant to come forward.

The murders least likely to be solved are those of young, racial- or ethnic-minority males. The killer is identified by police about 67 percent of the time when the victim is black or Hispanic, and only 64 percent for black victims between 20 and 24 years old. But when the victim is a non-Hispanic white person of any age, a suspect is identified 78 percent of the time.

Clearance rates vary widely by jurisdiction. In 2008, Chicago solved 35 percent of

its homicides; New Orleans, 22 percent; and Detroit, 21 percent. Yet Philadelphia was able to solve 75 percent of its killings; Denver, 92 percent; and San Diego, 94 percent.

One answer to solving murder cases is money — to be able to quickly flood a crime scene with trained investigators, to pay their overtime and to invest in computerized tracking and case-management systems.

But the biggest single factor in increasing clearance rates appears to be political will in city hall and departmental will in the police force.

Philadelphia is a case in point. When in 2006 only 56 percent of murders were being solved, the mayor declared a “crime emergency” and brought in a new police chief, who in turn installed a new homicide supervisor and impressed on the detectives that clearing murder cases was a priority.

“There’s nothing like having to sit in front of your captain and explain the status of every case,” said Richard Ross, the city’s deputy police commissioner. By 2008, the city’s clearance rate had risen to 75 percent.

Other cities have achieved similar turnarounds. It’s possible. People should not be allowed to get away with murder.

DALE MCFEATTERS
Scripps Howard News Service

Editorial

Mine databases to find serial killers

By doggedly combing through state and federal computer files and aggressively filing state Freedom of Information Act requests with local police departments, Scripps Howard News Service reporter Thomas Hargrove created a database of nearly 185,000 unsolved murders committed since 1980. Crime experts say it is the most complete accounting of homicide victims ever assembled in the United States.

A search of that database turned up alarming clusters of unsolved killings of women across the nation that strongly suggest the work of serial killers. The SHNS study focused on communities where police failed to solve at least three-quarters of murders of women of similar age killed by similar methods. The reason for singling out women in the study is that they represent 70 percent of all known serial murder victims.

The search turned up 161 clusters in which 1,247 murdered women met the criteria.

The results prompted authorities in Indiana and Ohio to launch new investigations into suspected serial killings and Nevada police to acknowledge that they are hunting a likely serial killer who targeted up to seven women, most of them prostitutes, and scattered their dismembered remains across three states. Phoenix police reviewed 11 murders flagged by the study but found no evidence of serial murder. The city, however, is building its own database of 1,900 unsolved murders committed since

1990 to search for possible serial involvement.

The U.S. Justice Department estimates that less than 1 percent of all murders are the work of serial killers, but the SHNS database suggests the real number is higher. And the database as currently configured cannot track highly mobile killers or ones who prey on a variety of victims.

Perhaps as frightening as the murders themselves are the gaping holes Hargrove found in the statistical reporting net. Local police reported about 510,000 of the 565,000 murders committed from 1980 to 2008 to the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report. The reporting is completely voluntary and local police departments can and do ignore it. The state of Illinois does not participate, although the city of Chicago does. California has made reporting mandatory for local police departments and other states should do likewise.

The FBI and law enforcement agencies generally have their hands full, but it should not be left to reporters like Hargrove to build, with easily available technology, an effective homicide database. Moreover, these databases should be built and scrutinized by experienced professionals to detect victim patterns and gaps in law enforcement.

Finally, police should put aside their reticence to tell the public when they suspect a serial killer is at work. The Justice Department recommends public warnings be issued, especially when specific groups like prostitutes and children are targeted.

DALE MCFEATTERS
Scripps Howard News Service



**SCRIPPS HOWARD
NEWS SERVICE**
SPECIAL REPORT



LaWanda Hawkins stands in front of photographs of murder victims at the Justice for Murdered Children office in San Pedro, Calif., in September. Hawkins, whose son was murdered, founded the organization to assist families of murder victims.