



Murder Accountability Project

Since 1980, more than 216,000 homicides in the United States remain unsolved. More than one-third of America's murderers have not been caught. About 5,000 new, unsolved murders are added to that total each year. In dozens of major cities and counties *a majority* of homicides go unsolved, even as many other police departments with similar challenges enjoy spectacular clearance rates.

The Murder Accountability Project (MAP) was organized in 2015 to educate US citizens on the importance of accurately accounting for unsolved homicides – both the total number of homicides and the percentage closed through arrest.

The current landscape...

- Homicides are investigated locally and prosecuted by city, county, or state jurisdictions
- Insufficient personnel and support resources are committed to the solution of homicides
- Declining homicide clearance rates are a “failure of will” by local political leaders
- When governors, mayors, county supervisors, city councils, county sheriffs, and police chiefs make homicide clearance a priority, arrest rates for murders usually improve, often dramatically

Examples of closure rate improvement with the application of resources:

- Elected Mayor of Philadelphia in 2007, Michael Nutter said he would declare a “crime emergency” and make murder a high priority. The murder closure rate soared from 55 percent to 75 percent.
- Police Chief Paul Walters in Santa Ana, California, demonstrated that gangs and drug traffickers can be overcome. Through force of will and by dedicated retooling of his police department, Walters pushed clearance rates from 28 percent in 1993 to more than 100 percent in his last years in office by tackling the backlog of cold cases.

Other challenges abound...

- Increasingly, murders are more likely to be committed by strangers to the victim
- There are more than 200 serial killers roaming the US, perhaps significantly more.
- Gang activity and illegal narcotics distribution fuel the number of stranger murders
- Witnesses are more reluctant to talk to the police

MAP's Board of Directors is composed of Retired law enforcement investigators and homicide detectives, investigative journalists, criminologists and other experts on the crime of homicide. MAP supports local, state, and federal crime data collections as the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR), the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP), and the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) in their efforts to collect homicide data and share it with the American public.

MAP believes the primary responsibility for the nation's declining homicide clearance rates rests with a failure of will by local political leaders. The public needs to pay attention to the growing problem of unsolved murders in their communities and to hold their elected officials accountable. Families of unsolved murder victims should become more vocal and form groups to magnify their political voice, to rally public opinion to demand that more be done. We all deserve to know the truth.