

Tallahassee and Leon County saw a record number of murders in 2020

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Tallahassee and Leon County saw a record number of murders in 2020 — part of an uptick in violent crime across the country that coincided with the coronavirus pandemic, social unrest and an economic plunge.

Twenty-eight people were murdered this year, according to records from the Tallahassee Police Department and LCSO. That's a 33% increase over last year, [when the city and county had 21 murders](#). The previous record of 22 murders was set in 2017.

Murder and other violent crime, including aggravated assault, began increasing in late May and continued at high levels through November, records show. Aggravated assaults saw year-over-year increases each month starting in May, some approaching 50%.



"I'm obviously very concerned about it as we all are," said TPD Chief Lawrence Revell in an interview with the Tallahassee Democrat. "We anticipated with COVID and people being inside together we might see crimes — especially violent crimes — rise. What we didn't anticipate was how that happened not only here but across the country."

'Lethal assaults': [Rural Big Bend sees alarming string of domestic violence homicides](#)

The FBI, in a preliminary report from September, found that nationwide, murders and certain manslaughters were up nearly 15% and aggravated assaults up nearly 5% in the first half of 2020 compared to 2019.

Some researchers have drawn direct links between the stresses of the pandemic and the rise in violence seen nationally this year. Atlanta, New Orleans and Chicago have seen increases in murders of near 50% and higher, according to media accounts and online police department data. Murders in Cleveland are at a near 30-year high.





"That's probably the case across the country in many cities simply because it generally follows that when the economy gets bad, things like gun violence tend to tick up," said Ed Clark, an epidemiologist at Florida A&M's Institute of Public Health and a gun violence expert. "That's what tends to happen, maybe because resources are scarce. The country is in turmoil right now. So some of these cities have upticks."

In Tallahassee, aggravated assaults — a key violent crime indicator — increased 27% for the first 11 months of 2020 compared to the same time last year. However, they dropped 24% in the unincorporated area of the county.

"It's all over the country," Revell said. "These are historic numbers. I certainly believe that everybody being locked up, penned up, jobs being scarce and people struggling with finances — all of that plays into it."

Revell said that while rising assault numbers are a likely result of national upheaval, the same may not hold true for the murders.

"I do think that our violent crime numbers are a direct result of that but not necessarily our homicide numbers," he said. "Because our homicides are still pretty much in line with what they've been in that the vast majority of them are drug related or there is a drug nexus and they are between people who know each other. That really hasn't changed."



More than a third of the murders were perpetrated by people who came to Tallahassee from across county or state lines. Revell said 10 of them involved individuals from Gadsden County.

The murder count does not include manslaughter and justifiable homicides, including four shootings, three by TPD and one by the Sheriff's Office, of violent suspects. Leon County grand jurors ruled officers acted lawfully in the fatal encounters.

In one case, police found a man Nov. 20 with gunshot wounds in a crashed vehicle at West Tharpe Street and Fairlane Road. Investigators found the shooting was unintentional and arrested a young man who ran from the scene for manslaughter.

[More: Grand jury says force justified in TPD shootings; report and others point to missteps](#)

[Rapes, robberies down](#)

The city and county saw declines in other types of violent offenses, according to figures from TPD, which works the vast majority of local crimes,

and the Sheriff's Office.

Rapes dropped 29% from January through November of this year compared to the same months in 2019. Robberies saw an even steeper 43% decline.

Those decreases may be tied to county-imposed curfews and statewide stay-at-home orders that restricted people's movements for more than two months combined. Three curfews, totaling two weeks in May, June and September, were imposed in Tallahassee because of civil unrest; the rest were issued over the pandemic.

"I think it's directly related to the fact that there aren't as many people out," Revell said. "A large number of robberies we have are of individuals. When there's less people moving around, there's less opportunity."



The murders happened across Tallahassee and Leon County, from low-income housing complexes to upscale developments. The year ended on a brutal note with a stabbing on the outskirts of Leon County.

More: [Leon County Sheriff's Office investigating fatal stabbing on New Year's Eve](#)

The victims were as young as 3 and as old as 75. The vast majority of them — at least 20 — were shot.

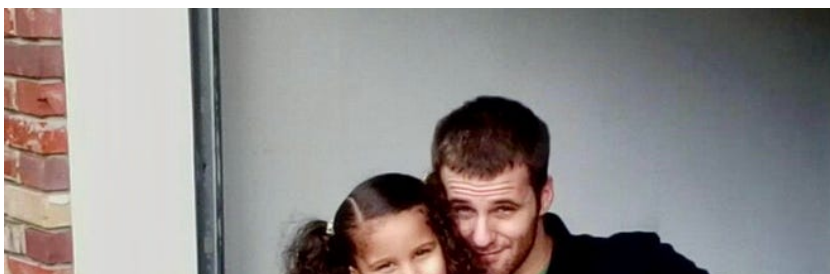
According to a Tallahassee Democrat analysis, there were [at least 71 shootings in 2020](#), with 26 people killed and 56 injured. The fatalities include the four justified shootings by law enforcement. Last year, there were at least 73 shootings, with 19 killed and 54 injured.

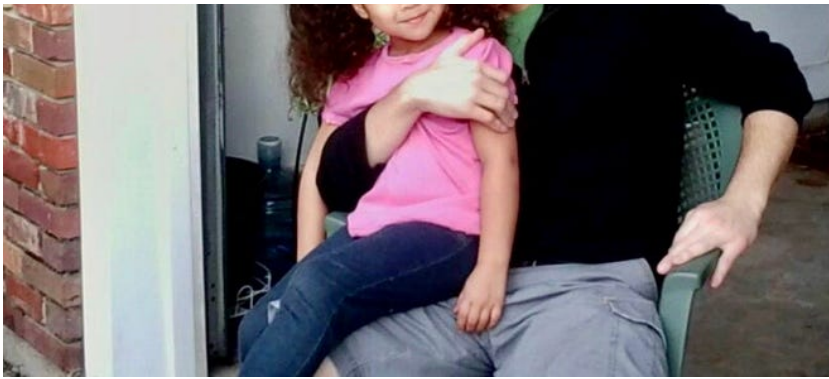
At least two dozen shootings happened at large "popup" parking lot parties. TPD has been working with the Sheriff's Office, the Florida Highway Patrol and campus police to crack down on the gatherings.

Investigators have made arrests in 20 of the 27 murders, two of which ended with the death of the perpetrator. Revell praised TPD's Violent Crimes Unit, which this year won [international honors for its investigative efforts](#).

"The important thing for the community to know is we're doing something about it," Revell said of the murders. "We're not alone in that this type of thing is happening all over the country. In fact, our percentage increase is much lower than most across the country."

[2020 murders](#)





1. [**John Dees, 34, an Army veteran who served in Iraq**](#), shot and killed late Jan. 9 or early Jan. 10. His body was found several days later off Pecan Road. [One person was arrested](#) as an accessory; two other suspects have not been charged.
2. [**Johnathan Spooner, 28, stabbed to death**](#) Jan. 25 by an acquaintance. [His alleged killer was arrested](#) shortly after his body was found on Ridge Road.
3. [**Charles Duncan, 59, stabbed to death**](#) Feb. 5 after a domestic disturbance off Oak Ridge Road. The suspect was arrested.
4. [**Grosbin Juarez Castro, 40, shot and killed**](#) March 22 in western Leon County. A suspect was arrested the same day and found in possession of crack cocaine.
5. [Victim publicly identified only as "E.D." shot and killed](#) April 3 on Carver Street. [Two teenage boys](#) were later arrested.
6. [**Kendrick Bostic, 20, shot and killed**](#) April 10 on Autumn Lane. [Two men were arrested](#) less than two weeks later.
7. [**Malik Jackson, 21, stabbed to death**](#) May 27 by Tony McDade, who ambushed him in his mother's driveway on Saxon Street. [Police shot and killed McDade](#) after he fled the scene.
8. [**Lamar S. Nelson, 20, shot and killed**](#) May 29 at Mission Road apartment complex. [One man was later arrested](#).
9. [Adult male, not publicly identified, shot and killed](#) May 29 on Texas Street. [U.S. Marshals arrested a suspect](#) earlier this month.
10. [**Victoria Sims, 75, found dead**](#) June 13 behind a house on Monday Road rented by [suspected serial Aaron Glee](#). Hours later, [he confessed to killing](#) her and a second victim.
11. [**Oluwatoyin Salau, 19, found dead**](#) June 13 at the Monday Road residence, the victim of Glee.
12. [**LaMario Bentley, 24, shot and killed**](#) June 18 on California Street. [Police arrested a suspect](#) several days later.
13. [**Malik Minnis, 21, shot and killed**](#) June 26 at a Pensacola Street apartment. [Two Havana men](#) were later arrested.
14. [**Joshua Purcell, 16, shot and killed**](#) July 15 in the parking lot of Bethel AME Church on West Orange Avenue. No arrests have been made.
15. [**Tyler Whitworth, 21, shot and killed**](#) July 24 during a robbery in the parking lot of a South Adams Street apartment complex. [Two men were later](#) arrested.
16. [**Cordarius Johnson, 20, shot and killed**](#) July 25 at a large party outside a West Orange Avenue gas station. [Police arrested a suspect](#) earlier this month.
17. [**Devon Nero, 34, stabbed to death**](#) Aug. 11 during a fight on Cactus Street. A suspect was arrested the same day.
18. [**Centel Deshazier, 40, killed**](#) in a drive-by shooting Aug. 21 at the Time Saver on Alabama Street. [Two people have been arrested](#).
19. [**Parth Patel, 25, shot and killed**](#) Aug. 27 during a home invasion robbery at his family's home on Ox Bow Circle. [One man was arrested in the murder](#); the man's [wife was later charged](#) as an accessory.

20. [Francis J. Ferraro Jr., 52, found dead](#) Sept. 1 at a south-side tire yard; police initially suspected a workplace accident but later determined he had been shot. No arrests have been made.

21. [Dimitri Jones Sr., 22, shot and killed](#) Sept. 20 at Springfield Apartments on Joe Louis Street. [Police arrested a suspect](#) within 48 hours.

22. [Unidentified person killed during a shooting](#) Oct. 2 at the Westgate housing development that left another person injured. No arrests have been made.

23. [Dilip Bhaichandbhai Patel, 53, shot and killed](#) Oct. 3 during an armed robbery at the Sunoco gas station on South Monroe Street. [Police later arrested](#) a suspect.

24. [Barbara Pettit Walters, 74, shot and killed](#) Oct. 14 in an apparent murder-suicide carried out by her son Jason Matthew Walters, Tallahassee attorney.

25. [A 3-year-old boy identified only as "W.M.,"](#) beaten to death Oct. 19 by a caregiver in his home. [His alleged killer was arrested](#) after taking the boy to the hospital just before his death.

26. [Unidentified man in his 60s](#), found dead Oct. 26 in his home on Old Bainbridge Road. No arrests have been made in the case.

27. [Unidentified adult male shot and killed](#) Nov. 18 in the 2300 block of Mission Road. No arrests have been made.

28. [Unidentified adult male was fatally stabbed on New Year's Eve in the 9400 block Old St. Augustine Road.](#)

Contact Jeff Burlew at jburlew@tallahassee.com or follow @JeffBurlew on Twitter.

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