

Homicide

In 1996, the estimated number of persons murdered in the United States was 19,645. The 1996 figure was down 9 percent from 1995, 17 percent from 1992, and 2 percent from the 1987 level. (*Federal Bureau of Investigation. (released September 28, 1997). Crime in the United States, Uniform Crime Reports, 1996, p. 14. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.*)

As compared to 1995 figures, reported murders in 1996 dropped 10 percent in the nation's cities, 9 percent in suburban counties, and 6 percent in rural counties. The greatest decrease -- 13 percent -- was registered in cities with populations of 250,000 to 499,999. (*Ibid.*)

All four regions of the United States showed declines in the number of murders reported from 1995-1996. The greatest drops were in the Northeast and West, which each experienced a 13 percent decrease in reported murders. Reported murders in the South and Midwest decreased by 7 percent in 1996. (*Ibid.*)

Down 10 percent from 1995, the national murder rate in 1996 was 7.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, the lowest since 1985. Five- and ten-year trends show the 1996 murder rate was 20 percent lower than in 1992, and 11 percent below the 1987 rate. (*Ibid.*)

Based on supplemental data about 15,848 of the estimated 19,645 murders in 1996: 77 percent of the victims were males and 87 percent were persons 18 years of age or older. Forty-three percent were ages 20 through 34. The percentages of whites and blacks murdered were equal at 49 percent, and other races accounted for the remainder. (*Ibid.*)

In 1996, according to supplemental data reported for 18,108 offenders, 90 percent of the offenders for whom sex and age were reported were male, and 86 percent were persons 18 of age and older. Sixty-nine percent were ages 17-34. Of offenders for whom race was known, 52 percent were black, 45 percent were white, and the remainder were persons of other races. (*Ibid.*)

Murder is most often intraracial among victims and offenders. In 1996, data based on incidents involving one victim and one offender show that 93 percent of the black murder victims were slain by black offenders, and 85 percent of white murder victims were killed by white offenders. (*Ibid.*)

Males were most often slain by males (89 percent in single victim/single offender situations). These same data show, however, that 9 out of 10 female victims were murdered by males. (*Ibid.*)

As in previous years, firearms were used in approximately 7 out of every 10 murders committed in the nation. (*Ibid.*, p.17)

In 1996, over 50 percent of all murder victims knew their assailants: 13 percent were related and 38 percent were acquainted. Fifteen percent of the victims were murdered by strangers, while the relationships among victims and offenders were unknown for 35 percent of the murders. (*Ibid.*, p. 17)

Fifty-five law enforcement officers were feloniously slain in the line of duty during 1996, 19 fewer than in 1995. (*Ibid.*, p. 285)