



Murder

Definition

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program defines murder and nonnegligent manslaughter as the willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another.

The classification of this offense is based solely on police investigation as opposed to the determination of a court, medical examiner, coroner, jury, or other judicial body. The UCR Program does not include the following situations in this offense classification: deaths caused by negligence, suicide, or accident; justifiable homicides; and attempts to murder or assaults to murder, which are classified as aggravated assaults.

Data collection

In addition to the number of murder offenses known, the UCR Program also encourages law enforcement agencies to report supplementary homicide data as well as information about justifiable homicides that may have occurred within their jurisdictions.

Supplementary Homicide Data—The UCR Program's supplementary homicide data provide information regarding the age, sex, race, and ethnicity of the murder victim and the offender; the type of weapon used; the relationship of the victim to the offender; and the circumstances surrounding the incident. Law enforcement agencies are asked—but not required—to provide complete supplementary homicide data for each murder they report to the UCR Program. Information gleaned from these supplementary homicide data can be viewed in the Expanded Homicide Data section.

Justifiable homicide—Certain willful killings must be reported as justifiable or excusable. In the UCR Program, justifiable homicide is defined as and limited to:

- The killing of a felon by a peace officer in the line of duty.
- The killing of a felon, during the commission of a felony, by a private citizen.

Because these killings are determined through law enforcement investigation to be justifiable, they are tabulated separately from murder and nonnegligent manslaughter.

More information about justifiable homicide is furnished in the Expanded Homicide Data section and in Expanded Homicide Data Table 14, “Justifiable Homicide by Weapon, Law Enforcement, 2016–2020,” and Expanded Homicide Data Table 15, “Justifiable Homicide by Weapon, Private Citizen, 2016–2020.”

Overview

- In 2020, the estimated number of murders in the nation was 21,570. This was a 29.4 percent increase from the 2019 estimate, a 23.9 percent increase from the 2016 figure, and a 47.1 percent increase from the number in 2011. (See Tables 1 and 1A.)
- There were 6.5 murders per 100,000 people in 2020. The murder rate in 2020 was up from the rate in 2019 (28.9 percent). Also, the murder rate was up 21.6 percent when compared with the 2016 rate and 39.1 percent from the 2011 rate. (See Tables 1 and 1A.)
- Of the estimated number of murders in the United States, 47.1 percent were reported in the South, 22.3 percent were reported in the Midwest, 18.9 percent were reported in the West, and 11.7 percent were reported in the Northeast. (See Table 3.)

Expanded data

UCR expanded offense data are details of the various offenses that the UCR Program collects beyond the count of how many crimes law enforcement agencies report. These details may include the type of weapon used in a crime, type or value of items stolen, and so forth. In addition, expanded data include trends (for example, 2-year comparisons) and rates per 100,000 inhabitants.

Expanded information regarding murder is available in the following tables:

Trends (2-year): Tables 12, 13, and 14

Rates (per 100,000 inhabitants): Tables 16, 17, and 18

Expanded Homicide Data (supplementary homicide information):

Victim data: Expanded Homicide Data Tables 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13

Offender data: Expanded Homicide Data Tables 3, 5, and 6

Victim/offender relationship data: Expanded Homicide Data Table 10

Circumstance data: Expanded Homicide Data Tables 10, 11, 12, and 13

Weapons data: Expanded Homicide Data Tables 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, and Table 20