

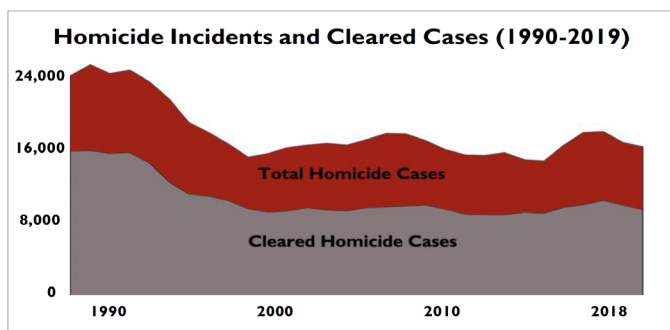
Homicide Clearance Rates, 1990-2019

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The total number of unsolved homicides grows each year in the United States. Despite this growth, little is known about the characteristics that impact the solvability of these crimes. This Stat Sheet examines these trends in the proportion of homicides known to the police that are “cleared” by an arrest (i.e., the solvability rates).

Key Stats

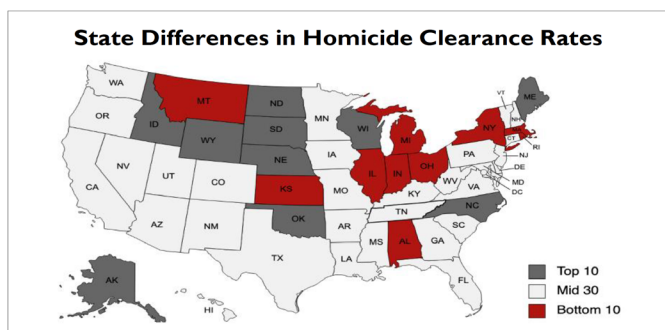
1



Source: UCR (1990-2019)

Many homicides are unsolved
According to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report, over half a million homicides occurred from 1990 to 2019. About 40% of these cases remain unsolved. Both the homicide rate and solvability rate (i.e., the proportion of homicides known to the police that are cleared by an arrest) have generally declined over time.

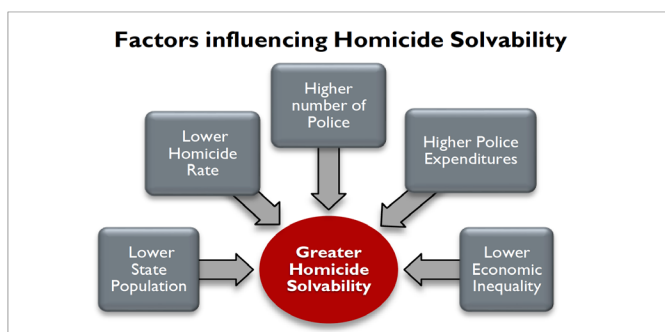
2



Source: UCR (1990-2019)

On average 63% of homicides are solved nationally, with large variation by state.
The percent of homicides solved range from 86% (Wyoming) to 44% (Alabama). States shown in grey solved the most homicides, while states shown in red solved the least. For comparison, Nevada solved 65% of homicides, which is close to the national average.

3



Source: Brookman et al., (2019)

Various factors impact the solvability of homicide. Homicide solvability may be impacted by a state’s population, homicide rate, number of police, police expenditures, and levels of economic inequality. These factors may influence the characteristics of homicide and how police investigations are carried out.

Center for Crime and Justice Policy

Data Sources

The data used in this stat sheet were drawn from a variety of sources. First, data on homicides were taken from the Murder Accountability Project (2019) which tracks information on unsolved homicides in America. Data on homicide clearance is based on the FBI's (2019) Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) from 1990 to 2019. Limitations of this dataset include underreporting (e.g., crimes being underreported to the police, police not reporting to the FBI) and a lack of details on the characteristics of the crime.

Second, the interpretation of Figure 3 is based on existing research (see Borg & Parker, 2001; Brookman et al., 2019; Puckett & Lendman, 2003). Data on risk factors for homicide solvability draws from the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) (population), the UCR (2019) (number of police), Statista (2019) (police expenditures), and the Economic Public Policy Institute (2021) (economic inequality). Limitations of these sources also include underreporting and potential bias and inaccuracies in the initial data collection.

Figure Notes

The complete list of homicide clearance by state can be found in the table to the right. The average number of homicides solved has been computed from 1990 to 2019. These numbers inform the state map in Figure 2. Additionally, Illinois is considered an outlier in this dataset. The actual homicide clearance rate for the state may be closer to 45% based on data from Chicago (Sweeney & Gorner, 2020).

| State | % Homicides Solved |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Wyoming | 85.8 |
| 2. North Dakota | 82.9 |
| 3. Maine | 80.8 |
| 4. North Carolina | 78.2 |
| 5. Wisconsin | 78.1 |
| 6. Oklahoma | 78.1 |
| 7. Alaska | 77.9 |
| 8. Idaho | 77.8 |
| 9. Nebraska | 76.3 |
| 10. South Dakota | 72.2 |
| 11. Arkansas | 72.2 |
| 12. West Virginia | 70.9 |
| 13. Pennsylvania | 70.9 |
| 14. Texas | 70.9 |
| 15. Washington | 70.2 |
| 16. South Carolina | 69.8 |
| 17. Virginia | 69.3 |
| 18. Utah | 67.7 |
| 19. Iowa | 67.6 |
| 20. Missouri | 67.4 |
| 21. Tennessee | 66.3 |
| 22. Connecticut | 66.1 |
| 23. Nevada | 65.5 |
| 24. Kentucky | 65.3 |
| 25. New Jersey | 64.8 |
| 26. Colorado | 64.5 |
| 27. Vermont | 63.6 |
| 28. Mississippi | 62.5 |
| 29. Florida | 62.3 |
| 30. Hawaii | 61.5 |
| 31. Minnesota | 61.3 |
| 32. Georgia | 61.0 |
| 33. New Hampshire | 60.6 |
| 34. Maryland | 59.9 |
| 35. Arizona | 59.7 |
| 36. Oregon | 59.6 |
| 37. Delaware | 58.2 |
| 38. California | 57.9 |
| 39. Louisiana | 57.7 |
| 40. New Mexico | 56.4 |
| 41. Montana | 54.9 |
| 42. Ohio | 53.7 |
| 43. Rhode Island | 53.5 |
| 44. Massachusetts | 53.3 |
| 45. New York | 53.3 |
| 46. Indiana | 49.8 |
| 47. Kansas | 49.5 |
| 48. Michigan | 44.7 |
| 49. Alabama | 43.9 |
| 50. Illinois | 7.1 |

For references in this Stat Sheet, see the CCJP website: www.unlv.edu/CCJP

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