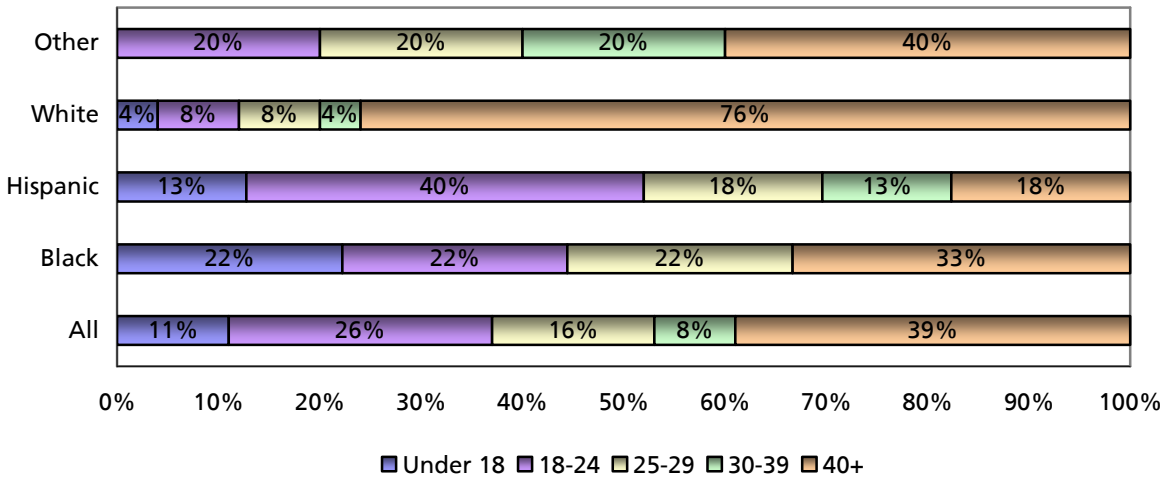


HOMICIDE VICTIMIZATION VARIES BY AGE, ETHNICITY, AND MOTIVE

In 2008, there was a total of 90 homicides in San Diego County, which was the third lowest number in the past 25 years and a 15 percent decrease from 2007 (106). A closer examination of these crimes provides a glimpse into the characteristics of these individuals and what motives were involved in their victimizations. Overall, males (78%), Hispanics and Blacks (45% and 20%, respectively) (not shown), and individuals under 25 (Figure 1) were more likely to be victims, given their proportion in the population¹. However, when taking into account age and ethnicity, Hispanic victims were more likely to be young, with 40 percent between the ages of 18 and 24, while Whites were more likely to be victimized as they aged, with over three-quarters (76%) 40 years or older (Figure 1).

Figure 1

HISPANIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS MORE LIKELY TO BE UNDER 25, WHILE MAJORITY OF WHITE HOMICIDE VICTIMS 40 AND OLDER



TOTAL = 88

NOTES: Cases with missing information not included. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: SANDAG; Local law enforcement agencies

When motive is also taken into account, a clearer picture emerges as to factors contributing to victimization. Specifically, for the 62 homicide cases where motive was known, arguments accounted for 32 percent, closely followed by gang activity (31%). Furthermore, these two motives seemed to be closely linked to the age of the victim. Specifically, arguments (43%) or domestic violence (38%) were the precipitating events for homicide victims over 40, whereas gang activity was the primary reason leading to the murder of younger individuals. That is, gang-related motives were noted for nearly nine out of ten (88%) victims aged 15 to 17 and over half (56%) of victims 18 to 24. This level of understanding is valuable in strategically targeting at-risk populations to provide prevention services, interventions, and policies to help reduce the risk of violence that leads to loss of a human life.

¹ According to current population estimates, Hispanics comprise 30 percent of the general population, Blacks 5 percent, individuals 24 years of age and younger 25 percent, and individuals 40 years of age and older 42 percent.