Homicides in the San Diego Region 2017

In 2017, 80 homicides were reported in the San Diego region, the fourth lowest number in the past 38 years (Figure 1). Because no other crime can have a greater impact on a community, this CJ Flash focuses on information available to date regarding these 80 homicides.

**Highlight 1**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

1, there were 17,793 homicides nationwide in 2015, the most recent year available, and 73% were committed with a firearm. In 2017, 53% of the homicides in San Diego County were committed with a firearm – below the national average.

![Figure 1: Number of homicides reported in the San Diego region, 1980-2017](image)

**Figure 2: Weapon type involved in San Diego County homicides, 2017**

- **Firearm**: 53%
- **Knife**: 26%
- **Other**: 21%

Only 73 of the 80 homicides originated in 2017 – 1 was a 1996 shooting with the victim succumbing to the injuries in 2017, 1 was a 2012 missing person which was verified as a homicide in 2017, and 5 were cases that involved initial injury in 2016 that resulted in death in 2017.

To date, there have been more homicides in the first four months of 2018 (31), compared to 2017 (25), according to preliminary statistics.

Highlight 2

Compared to victims (n=80), homicide suspects (n=85 across 68 cases) were younger and more likely to be male. Both groups were ethnically diverse, although Whites represented a greater proportion of victims and Hispanics a greater proportion of suspects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victims (n=80)</th>
<th>73% male Mean age 40.4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White 36%</td>
<td>Hispanic 29% Black 19% Other 16%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Suspects (n=85)</th>
<th>88% male Mean age 33.7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic 41%</td>
<td>White 29% Black 19% Other 12%</td>
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When the race of the victim was compared to the race of the suspect (or the first suspect listed if multiple):

- 67% of White victims had a White suspect,
- 67% of Hispanic victims had a Hispanic suspect,
- 50% of Black victims had a Black suspect, and
- 36% of victims of other ethnicities had a suspect of another ethnicity

Highlight 3

Most homicide victims (81%) were killed by someone they knew – only 19% were killed by a stranger. There were significant gender differences, however, with males more likely to be killed by an acquaintance or stranger, and females by a family member or significant other.

| Family/significant other | 67% female 13% male |
| Acquaintance of victim   | 24% female 63% male |
| Stranger                 | 10% female 24% male |

Highlight 4

For the 56 homicides where motive could be determined, an “argument” was the most likely reason, noted in half of the cases. Compared to homicides with another type of motive, a firearm was less likely to be used when an argument was involved (Figure 3). In addition, the victim was more likely to be male (86% arguments, versus 61% other motives).

Figure 3
Type of weapon used by motive, 2017

- Firearm: 75%
- Knife/cutting instrument: 32%
- Other weapon: 25%

2 There were 46 male victims and 21 female victims where victim-suspect relation could be determined.
3 Other motives included domestic violence (18%), gangs (13%), drugs (9%), robbery (7%), and other (4%).
Highlight 5

4 in every 5 homicides where a suspect had been identified involved only one suspect, as opposed to multiple suspects.

Of the 12 cases with multiple suspects where motive could be determined:

- 42% (5) argument
- 25% (3) robbery
- 17% (2) gang issues
- 17% (2) drugs

80% of homicides involved one suspect, as opposed to multiple suspects. Homicides where robbery was the motive were more likely to have multiple suspects. Only 2% of single suspect cases were related to robbery, compared to 25% of multiple suspect cases.

Highlight 6

Of the 85 identified suspects, 10 were females who committed 9 homicides. Interestingly, homicides with a female suspect most often had a male victim, used a firearm, and the suspect committed the crime with another individual, compared to those with a male suspect.

Of the deaths examined by the San Diego County Medical Examiner’s Office categorized as homicide in 2017, preliminary data show that 80% tested positive for one or more substances at the time of death.

Most common substances:

- 42% marijuana (THC)
- 31% methamphetamines
- 28% ethanol/alcohol
- 15% non-opioid prescription drugs
- 10% opioid prescription drugs

Highlight 7

Of the 80 homicides, 7 were identified as gang-related, and 6 of the 80 victims were identified as being gang members. How did these victims differ from other victims?

Victimizations with female suspects (n=9)

- 78% male victims
- 78% used firearm
- 67% involved another suspect

Victimizations with male suspects (n=65)

- 71% male victims
- 52% used firearm
- 20% involved another suspect

100% male

Younger ages between 18-31 (mean 24.2)

More firearms: 5 of 6 killed with a firearm