Firearm Homicides in King County:
Key Findings from Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS)

Questions: Contact data.request@kingcounty.gov
Outline

- Background:
  - Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS)
  - Primary uses
  - Types of crimes reported

- Key Findings

- Information Gaps
  - Limited geographic information
  - Missing suspect criminal history
  - Narrative of incident not provided
  - Suicides not systematically included
Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS)

- Used by law enforcement to identify serial killers, solve violent crimes and speed apprehension/prosecution of violent criminals

- Excludes officer-involved incidents

- Source: Washington State Attorney General’s Office

- Police and sheriff’s departments in Washington and Oregon voluntarily contribute crime-related information
Analysis Approach

- King County firearm-related homicides only, 2001-2012.
  - Victim and suspect demographics
  - Motives/crime classifications
  - Victim-suspect relationships
  - Weapon type

- No individually identifiable information was provided
Key Findings from HITS analysis

- On average 34 victims a year from 2001-2012.
- Mass shootings are rare, a single victim is the norm.
- 9 out of 10 firearm homicides involve handguns.
- About half of firearm homicide victims and suspects were 18-29 years old.
- Younger victims (18-29 years) disproportionately African American or American Indian/Alaska Native.
- “Heat of anger” was the primary motivation in incidents for victims for all ages.
- Domestic violence more common motivation in incidents involving older (≥30 years) than younger victims.
- Older victims (≥ 30 years) had closer relationship(s) with shooter.
### Firearm Homicide Summary — King County, WA, 2001-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firearm Homicide Summary</th>
<th>Total (2001-2012)</th>
<th>Average/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of incidents</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of victims</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of suspects</td>
<td>458*</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*457 unique suspects, 1 suspect counted twice due to involvement in 2 different incidents and being different ages at each incident*
## Suspect Status in Firearm Homicide Incidents — King County, WA, 2001-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suspect Status* (2001-2012)</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was arrested and/or charged as a suspect in this case</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified (named) — Not arrested or charged in this case</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown – Seen</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown – Not seen</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*457 unique suspects, 1 suspect counted twice due to involvement in 2 different incidents and being different ages at each incident
Firearm Homicide Suspect Criminal History — King County, WA, 2001-2012

Percent of Suspects

- **Unknown**: 58.3%
- **Non Offender Status**: 21.3%
- **Prior Conviction**: 9.1%
- **On Parole/Probation**: 5.4%
- **Wanted on Warrant(s)/Other Charges**: 4.4%
- **Out on Bail/Appeal/PR Bond**: 1.3%
- **Registered Sex Offender**: 0.2%


Criminal history unknown for about 3 out of 5 suspects
No clear trend in number of victims per incident
8 of 10 firearm homicide incidents involve a single victim

- Single Victim: 79.8%
- Multiple Victims (includes non-fatal): 17.7%
- Series Victims: 0.8%
- Possible Series Victim: 0.5%
- Unknown: 1.1%

Firearm Homicide Incident by Type — King County, WA, 2001-2012
Almost 9 of 10 firearm homicides involve handguns


Weapon Type in Firearm Homicides* — King County, WA, 2001-2012

*Excludes unknown weapon types (n=17 incidents, 4.6% of 367 total incidents)
Young adults, ages 18-29, comprise about half of both firearm homicide victims and suspects.


Firearm Homicide Victims and Suspects by Age Group – King County, WA, 2001-2012
Firearm homicides of 18-29 year olds disproportionately affect African American/Black and American Indian/Alaska Native young adults.

**Data Source:** Washington State Attorney General’s Office, Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS), 2001-2012.


Firearm Homicide Victim and Suspect 18-29 Yrs. by Race/Ethnicity — King County, WA, 2001-2012
Majority of firearm homicide victims and suspects are male

Total Motives/Crime Classifications of Firearm Homicide Victims by Age

**Victims 18-29 Years**

- Heat Of Anger: 27%
- Gang: 21%
- Drug Related: 15%
- Domestic Violence: 4%
- Accidental: 4%
- Robbery: 5%
- Revenge: 8%
- Other: 16%

**Victims 30+ Years**

- Heat Of Anger: 25%
- Gang: 8%
- Drug Related: 12%
- Domestic Violence: 13%
- Other: 30%
- Revenge: 4%
- Robbery: 7%
- Accidental: 1%

May involve more than one motive; excludes victims where motive was unable to be determined: n = 20 among victims 18-29 yrs. and n = 14 among victims ≥30 yrs.
Total and Leading Firearm Homicide Motives/Crime Classifications: Victims 18-29 Years

6 Leading Motives or Motive Combinations (% of Victims)

- Heat of Anger (16%)
- Gang (14%)
- Drug Related (9%)
- Heat of Anger, Gang (8%)
- Heat of Anger, Revenge (5%)
- Drug Related, Gang (4%)

May involve more than one motive; excludes victims where motive was unable to be determined: n = 20 among victims 18-29 yrs.
Total and Leading Firearm Homicide Motives/Crime Classifications: Victims 30+ Years

- **Heat Of Anger**: 25%
- **Domestic Violence**: 13%
- **Drug Related**: 12%
- **Gang**: 8%
- **Revenge**: 4%
- **Robbery**: 7%
- **Accidental**: 1%
- **Other**: 30%

6 Leading Motives or Motive Combinations (% of Victims):

- Heat of Anger (12%)
- Domestic Violence (7%)
- Heat of Anger, Gang (7%)
- Heat of Anger, Domestic Violence (4%)
- Drug Related (4%)
- Heat of Anger, Drug Related (4%)


May involve more than one motive; excludes victims where motive was unable to be determined: n = 14 among victims ≥30 yrs.
Firearm Homicide Victim-Suspect Relationships by Age: Closer relationships with suspects among older victims

VICTIMS 18-29 YEARS

- Acquaintance: 42%
- Strangers: 35%
- Friend/Neighbor: 12%
- Other Family Member: 6%

VICTIMS 30+ YEARS

- Acquaintance: 31%
- Strangers: 22%
- Friend/Neighbor: 22%
- Other Family Member: 7%
- Current/Ex-Intimate Partner: 10%
- Other: 8%

Victims 18-29 Years

Victims 30+ Years
Data gaps

- Limited geographic information
- Limited suspect information to determine violence history
  - Criminal history missing for 58% of suspects
  - About 20% of suspects in firearm homicides were unidentified (not named)
- Need narrative to understand context of incident
  - No leading/primary motive identified; motives not ordered in hierarchy
- Suicide deaths not systematically collected
  - Only included if part of murder-suicide incidents
- Firearm ownership history (e.g. stolen, legally obtained) not collected
Key Findings from HITS analysis

- On average 34 victims a year from 2001-2012.
- Mass shootings are rare, a single victim is the norm.
- 9 out of 10 firearm homicides involve handguns.
- About half of firearm homicide victims and suspects were 18-29 years old.
- Younger victims (18-29 years) disproportionately African American or American Indian/Alaska Native.
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