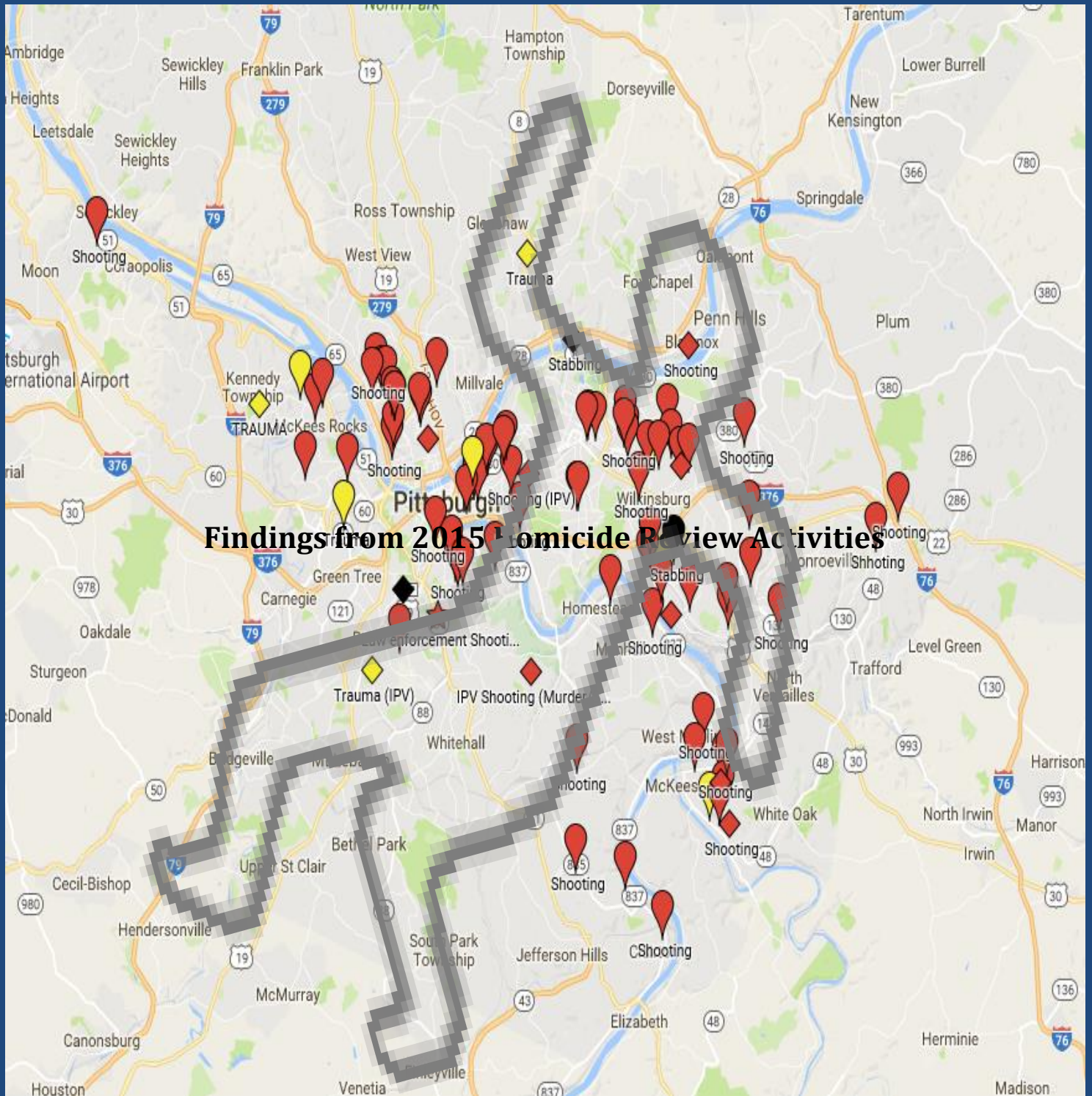


Community Violence Prevention Project

Homicide Review Findings Report (2015)



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Executive Summary

Our detailed review of Allegheny County's 114 homicides in 2015 further supports that we need to distinguish between types of homicide cases. The 2015 homicide total for the City of Pittsburgh was 59 (decrease of 20% from 2014) and for the Suburbs was 55 (increase of 33% from 2014).

Allegheny County Homicide Demographics 2015

- 100 victims were male (87% in 2015 compared to 56% in 2014).
- 92 victims were black (81% in 2015, compared to 59% in 2014).
- 20 Victims were killed in Pittsburgh Zone 5 (17% in 2015, compared to 25% in 2014).
- The median age of a homicide victim was 26.
- 27% of homicide victims were African American males between the ages of 21-30.
- The median age of a homicide suspect was 28.
- 72 (63%) victims had an arrest history.

A Typical Homicide in Allegheny County

- **Victim**
 - Male
 - African American
 - Between 21-30 years old
 - Has between 1 and 5 prior arrests
 - Has prior drug and/or burglary arrest on arrest history
 - Was or previously on probation/parole
- **Suspect**
 - Male
 - African American
 - Between 15-25 years old
 - Has between 1 and 5 prior arrests
 - Has prior drug and/or weapon arrest on arrest history
 - Was or previously on probation/parole
- **Homicide Circumstances**
 - The victim and suspect were peers (they had something in common)
 - The incident occurred between 9pm-12am
 - The incident occurred on either Tuesday or Saturday
 - The homicide involved a firearm

Key findings from 2015 show that:

- **Homicide victimization continues to be unevenly distributed across populations or places.** While only 13% of Allegheny County residents are black or African American, 81% of the victims were black. Seventeen percent of the homicides occurred in just 1 of Allegheny County's 130 neighborhoods.
- **Firearms were the main cause of death.** Cause of death in 86% of homicides was gunshot wounds.
- **Intimate partner/ Domestic homicide.** Female victims represented 12% of total homicides. Over half were killed by a current or former intimate or domestic partner (e.g., boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife, son, daughter, and in-laws).
- **There are social context factors for homicide victimization.** Chronic, multigenerational involvement in violence and illegal activities; additional opportunities for conflict through increased use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram); prevalence of drugs, alcohol, and access to firearms; and violence as normative behavior were identified as relevant in the homicides.

The complexity of homicide and intentional injury prevention has become increasingly clear and points to the urgent need for efforts to address violence at multiple levels within Allegheny County communities. The recommendations include:

- **Identify and involve the support networks of at-risk individuals and, specifically, engage those at risk who are not currently involved in mandated health or behavior programs.** Engaging individuals and families at risk of violence victimization in non-traditional settings (e.g., community-based organizations, primary care clinics) is a strategic way to address the complexity of peer conflict.
- **Modify community programs' participation requirements to ensure equal access to participation.** Engaging individuals will improve participation and commitment. Modify participation requirements (e.g., parent/guardian signature, payment) and adapt service delivery to include non-traditional methods in communities and enhance linkages and increase communication and coordination among behavior, health, and social programs and systems.
- **Increase community participation and investment in violence prevention efforts.** Combat attitudes of violence as normative behavior and promote an appropriate form of conflict resolution; support existing anti-violence groups and coalitions that provide awareness, education, and prevention; improve and strengthen community-police relations; and distribute anti-violence materials throughout Pittsburgh.
- **Enhance the homicide review process to better inform our understanding of contributing factors and potential solutions.** Recruit new community and law enforcement members; enhance data collection efforts, specifically to better account for the unique factors involved in intimate partner homicides; increase police involvement; and enhance dissemination methods.

Technical Notes

The Pitt Public Health Community Violence Prevention Initiative, within the Center for Health Equity and Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences at the Graduate School of Public Health, began in August 2012. Utilizing a public health perspective,¹ the project seeks to gain an enhanced understanding of the contextual and underlying factors impacting community violence so that appropriate recommendations specific to the unique needs of Allegheny County communities can be made. Utilizing our greater understanding and the experience gained from the 2012 through 2015 Homicide Reviews,² this represents our fourth findings report.

Background and Overview

The past ten years we have seen new trends in Allegheny County. First, people in the past did not cross bridges or community lines. People now are moving to and visiting other communities. Our Homicide Review Reports for the past three years show that many of the victims are killed in communities other than where they were originally raised or resided. The constant movement of people in and out of these communities has caused much discomfort in communities of color, especially those in urban areas. Efforts by the Pittsburgh Housing Authority to close public housing and move individuals may increase the risk of violence in certain cases.

Second, the gang problem is less prominent than it was in the 90's. With our research we have seen the formation of cliques and crews of individuals who used to be against one another now coming together as allies.

Third, we've learned that one family can sometimes affect the climate of a whole community.

Finally, the Homicide review has identified homicides among formerly incarcerated men that were a direct result of the charges that they went to jail for.

To address these changes, we must sustain more concrete relationships with the community, public officials, and institutions to understand how we can stop violence. We need a mechanism to communicate with prison officials to plan for the release and return of offenders to the community. Opening up communication between corrections, the police, and communities is a key feature of violence prevention. As simple as this sounds, we think greater efforts at communication are required to get in front of issues before they happen.

As we move forward with our review process, we are in the process of implementing Milwaukee's Homicide Review Commission process. Training for Allegheny County will take place in late September 2016. We hope that developing this enhanced Review will get more community involvement. We think that the collaboration that Milwaukee has among all sectors of society will assist us in getting to fewer homicides in a year. The process is something that we feel can be successful for Allegheny County if we adopt the process.

Methods

Objectives

The key objectives of the project are to:

1. Uncover patterns among incidents of homicide;
2. Identify key preventable factors that contribute to homicide;
3. Collectively develop recommendations about what could have been done to prevent homicides, and
4. Disseminate information and engage in community dialogue about violence prevention within Pittsburgh neighborhoods.

Expanding on the methods developed in 2012 through 2014,² we sought to gain an enhanced understanding of the greater contextual and underlying factors involved in the 2015 Allegheny County homicides. An advisory board offered guidance on project activities.

Partnership Coordination Using a participatory-based approach, key local stakeholders were identified and invited to partner on project activities. Community partners involved representatives from a variety of organizations, each invested and contributing expertise to the project's objectives. Partners included adult and juvenile courts, county jail, city and county social service providers, public health professionals, trauma physicians and health care professionals, anti-gun violence advocates, and community members with long-standing experience with violence prevention efforts in Allegheny County.

Data from Partners Data were collected on the 114 homicides through complementary sources of information including the Allegheny County Jail, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Allegheny County Adult and Juvenile Probation, various social media sites and the Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office. Partners were responsible for searching their own agencies for victim-specific information (e.g., previous involvement or supervision history, previous criminal charge) and sharing in preparation for review meetings.

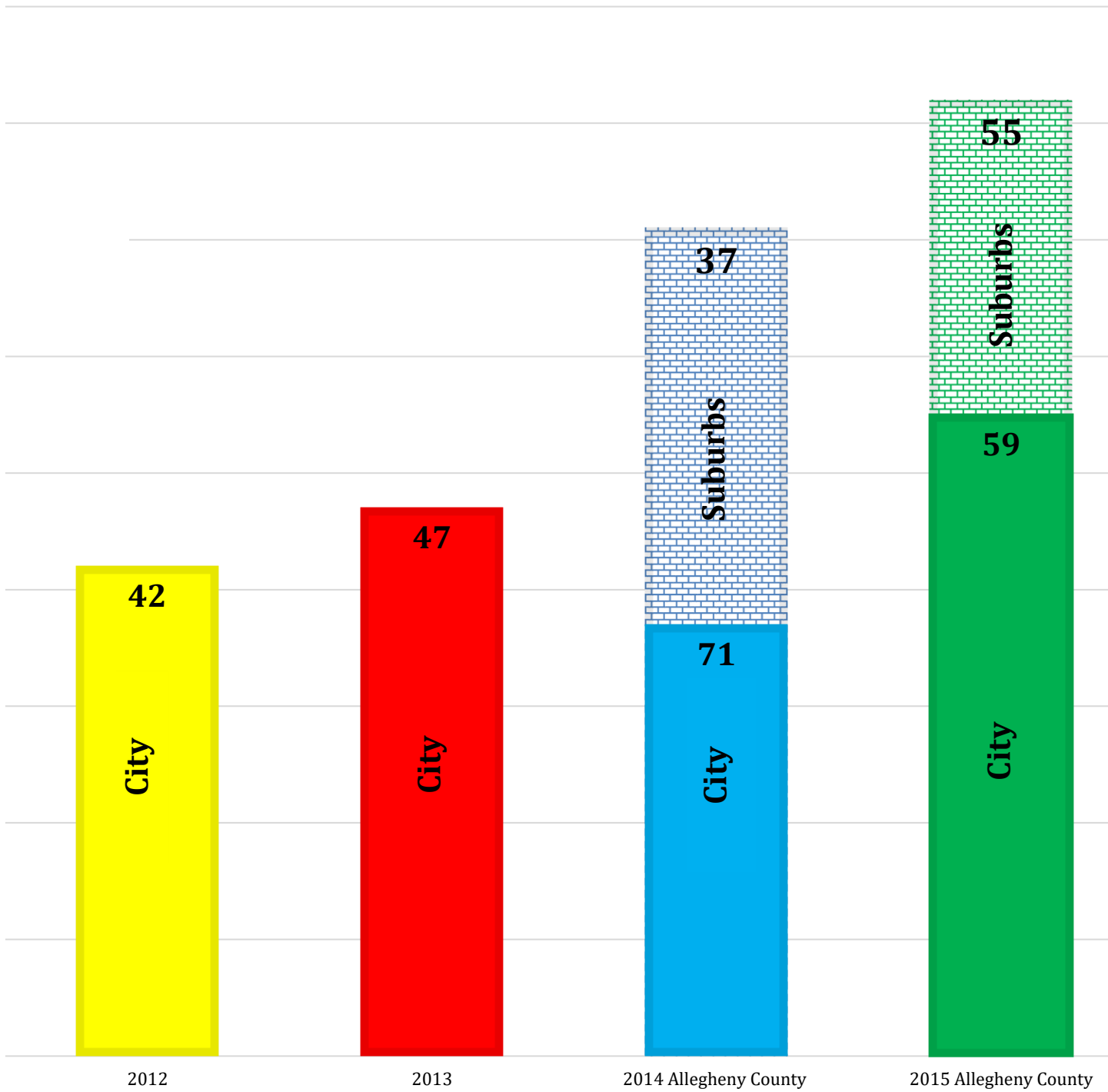
Data from Community Four team members - two academic research staff and two trained community members - constituted the "outreach team," who gathered fine-grained, contextual information surrounding the homicides from communities impacted by violence in 2015. Our outreach team members are long-term residents of Pittsburgh with extensive violence prevention experience, particularly around retaliatory violence and street outreach. The outreach team discussed homicide cases with key neighborhood members and attended local community meetings to collect further detailed information. Information was gathered for each homicide and victim, included such things as relationship of the victim with the suspected perpetrator, evidence of previous conflict between the two, family history of violence, and length of stay at residence. The outreach

team used information gathered from the community and media outlets to reach a consensus on whether the risk of retaliation was very likely.

Homicide Review Group Composed of community partners, eleven homicide review group meetings took place from February 2015 to January 2016 in which all 2015 homicides were discussed. Review meetings were organized by the month in which the homicide occurred in order to focus on the homicide while it is still current and the dynamics of each homicide. Community-based groups specific to the neighborhood where homicides occurred also were invited to attend the review. Meeting leaders encouraged brainstorming underlying causes of violence and intervention implications and recommendations. All review meeting participants signed a non-disclosure statement.

The information discussed in this report represents a summary of collected data and information shared in homicide review group meetings and does not represent individual or organizational perspectives.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY HOMICIDES 2012-2015



Results

Figure 1

Allegheny County Homicide **Victim** by Gender, Race and Age **2014**

Figure 2

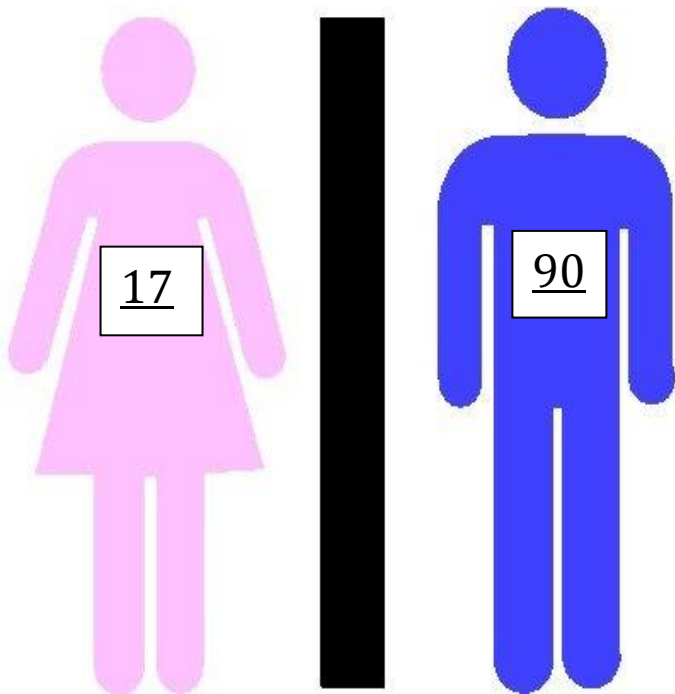


Figure 3

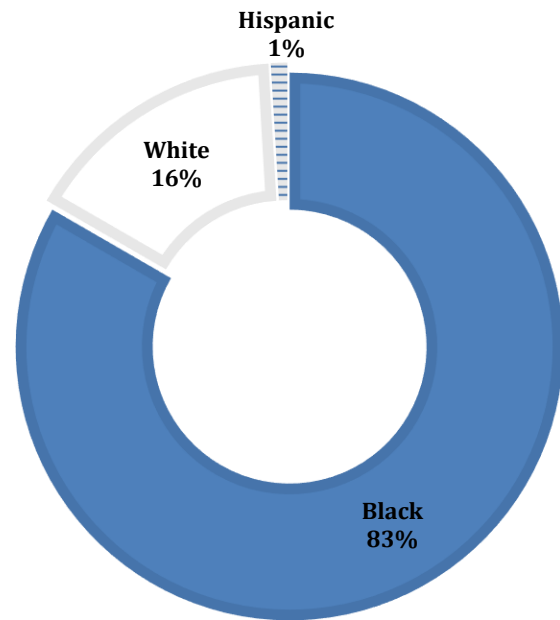


Figure 4

	AGE 0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51+
Black Males	1	21	25	21	8	4
White Males	2	1	2	0	0	4
Black Females	0	2	1	3	0	3
White Females	2	0	1	2	1	2
Hispanic Male	0	0	1	0	0	0
Unknown	1	0	0	0	0	0

Allegheny County Homicide **Victim** by Gender, Race and Age **2015**

Figure 5

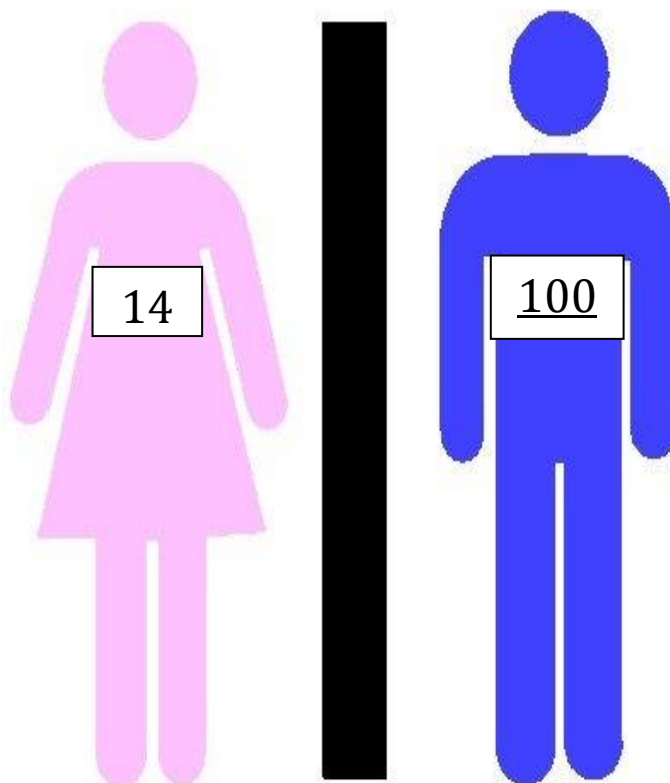


Figure 6

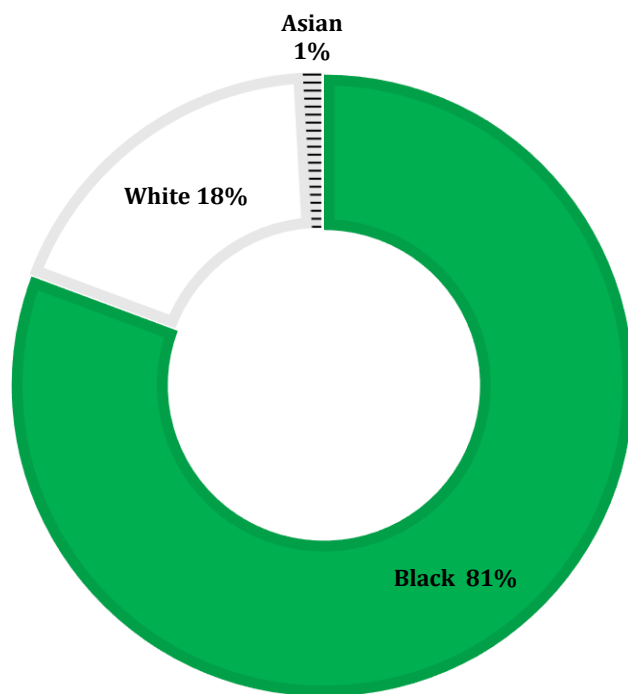


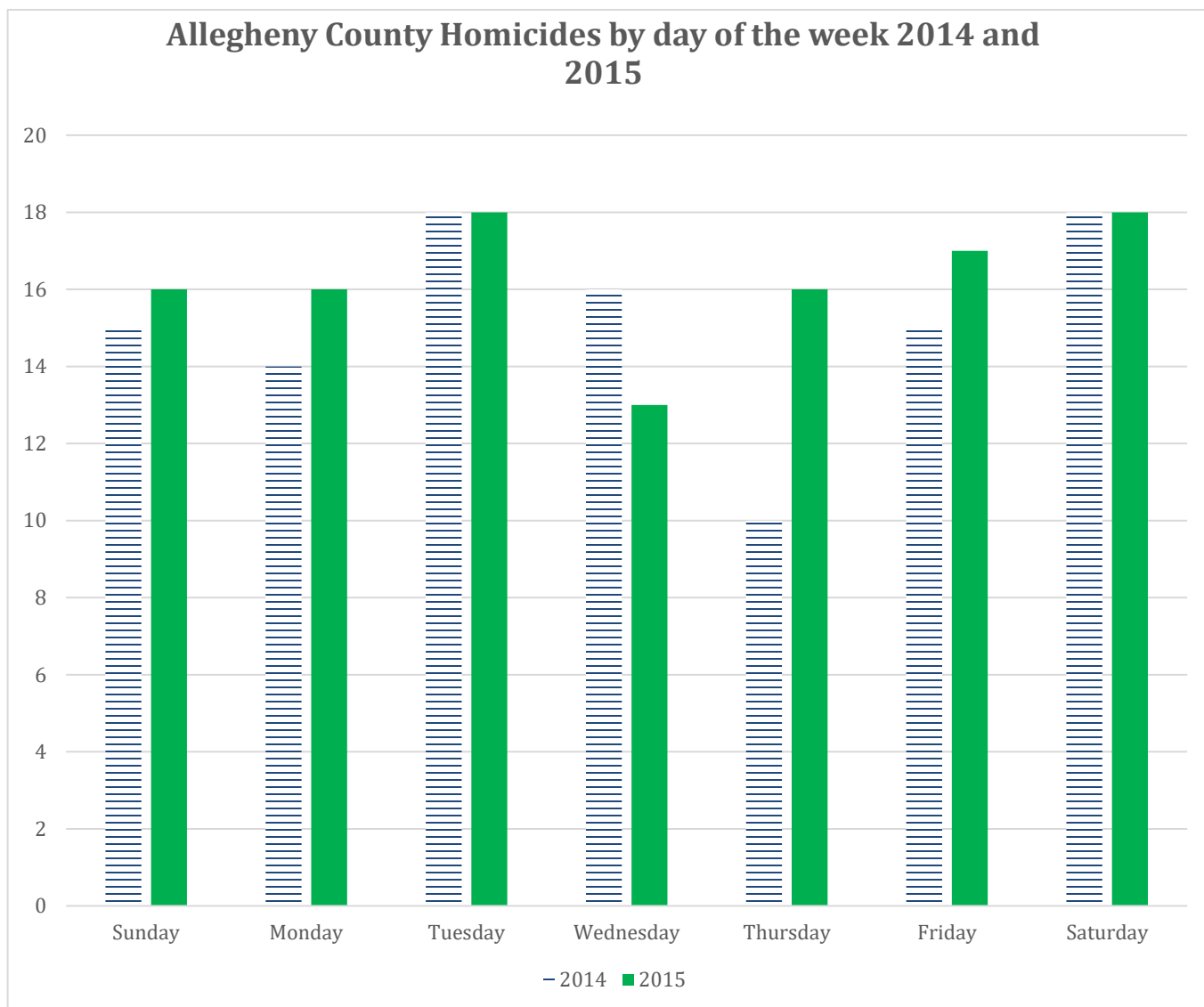
Figure 7

	Age 0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51+
Black Males	1	22	31	19	7	5
White Males	0	2	6	0	1	6
Black Females	1	2	3	0	0	1
White Females	1	0	2	0	0	3
Asian Female	0	0	1	0	0	0

Figure 8

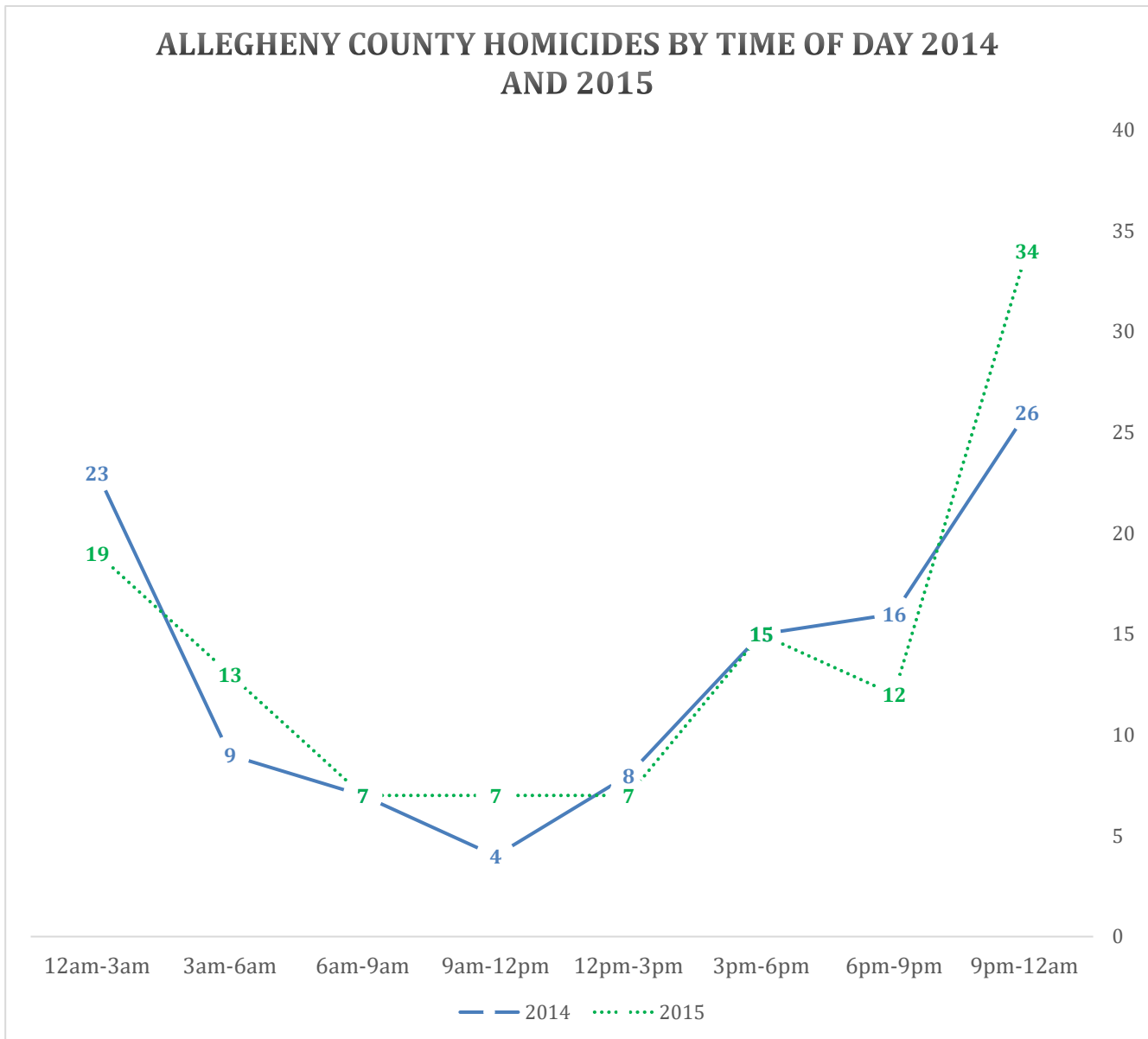
Zip Code	Neighborhood(s)	Land Area	Population	Police Department	Homicide Victims 2014	Homicide Victims 2015
15236	Baldwin	5.9 sq mi	19,812	Baldwin P.D	0	2
15221	Braddock Hills	1.0 sq mi	1,880	Braddock Hills P.D	0	2
15104	Braddock	2.45 sq. mi	8,839	Braddock P.D	4	5
15025	Clairton	2.8 sq mi	6,796	Clairton P.D	0	5
15216	Dormont	0.7 sq mi	8,593	Dormont P.D	0	0
15110	Duquesne	1.82 sq. mi	5,547	Duquesne P.D	3	0
15112	East Pittsburgh	0.4 sq mi	1,822	East Pittsburgh P.D	0	2
15238	Forward Township	19.9	3,771	Forward Township P.D	0	1
15120	Homestead	1.90 sq. mi	3,079	Homestead P.D	1	2
15215	Kennedy, Sharpsburg	6.1 sq mi	11,118	Kennedy/Sharpsburg P.D	0	2
15237	McCandless	24.21 sq. mi	41,499	McCandless P.D	2	0
15132	McKeesport	5.65 sq. mi	21,057	McKeesport P.D	4	11
15136	McKees Rocks	11.13 sq. mi	23,184	McKees Rocks P.D	4	5
15146	Monroeville	19.8 sq mi	28,386	Monroeville P.D	0	2
15108	Moon	39.47 sq. mi	38,927	Moon Township P.D	1	1
15120	Munhall	4.67 sq. mi	18,833	Munhall P.D	1	0
15148	Wilmerding	0.4 sq. mi	2,190	North Versailles P.D	0	1
15235	Penn Hills	14.66 sq. mi	33,681	Penn Hills P.D	3	3
15116	Shaler	11.2 sq mi	28,757	Shaler P.D	0	1
15218	Swissvale	1.2 sq mi	8,983	Swissvale P.D	0	2
15145	Turtle Creek	1.97 sq. mi	6,945	Turtle Creek P.D	1	0
15241	Upper St. Clair	10.4 sq. mi	19,651	Upper St. Clair P.D	1	0
15147	Verona	10.12 sq. mi	17,743	Verona P.D	5	0
15122	West Mifflin	14.2 sq mi	20,313	West Mifflin P.D	0	2
15229	West View	1.0 sq mi	6,771	West View P.D	0	1
15221	Wilkinsburg	6.15 sq. mi	31,069	Wilkinsburg P.D	7	5
15212	Northside	6.22 sq. mi	27,135	Zone 1 P.D	5	6
15214	Northside	4.7 sq. mi	14,293	Zone 1 P.D	6	5
15233	Manchester	0.279 sq mi	2,130	Zone 1 P.D		2
15210	Brentwood	6.8 sq. mi	28,641	Zone 2 P.D	1	2
15219	Hill District	2.29 sq. mi	17,684	Zone 2 P.D	8	6
15222	Strip District	0.81 sq. mi	3,525	Zone 2 P.D	1	0
15211	Mt. Washinton	1.139 sq mi	8,799	Zone 3 P.D	0	2
15210	Allentown, Arlington, Beltzhoover, Carrick, Knoxville	4.64 sq. mi	24,920	Zone 3 P.D	10	8
15207	Hazelwood	4.79 sq. mi	10,779	Zone 4 P.D	2	1
15213	Oakland	2.13 sq. mi	25,066	Zone 4 P.D	1	3
15221	East Hills	0.541 sq mi	3,169	Zone 5 P.D	0	5
15224	Bloomfield, Garfield,	1.01 sq. mi	10,172	Zone 5 P.D	7	4
15206	East Liberty, Larimer, Lincoln Lemington	2.838 sq. mi	12,584	Zone 5 P.D	7	4
15208	Homewood	1.61 sq. mi	10,486	Zone 5 P.D	12	7
15201	Stanton Heights	2.48 sq. mi	12,850	Zone 5 P.D	1	0
15216	Beechview	1.46 sq mi	7,974	Zone 6 P.D	0	2
15205	Crafton Heights	0.754 sq mi	3,814	Zone 6 P.D	0	1
15226	Brookline	2.54 sq. mi	13,551	Zone 6 P.D	1	1
15204	Chartiers, Esplen, Sheraden	1.86 sq. mi	7,986	Zone 6 P.D	5	0
15220	Elliot	4.94 sq. mi	18,023	Zone 6 P.D	4	0

Figure 10

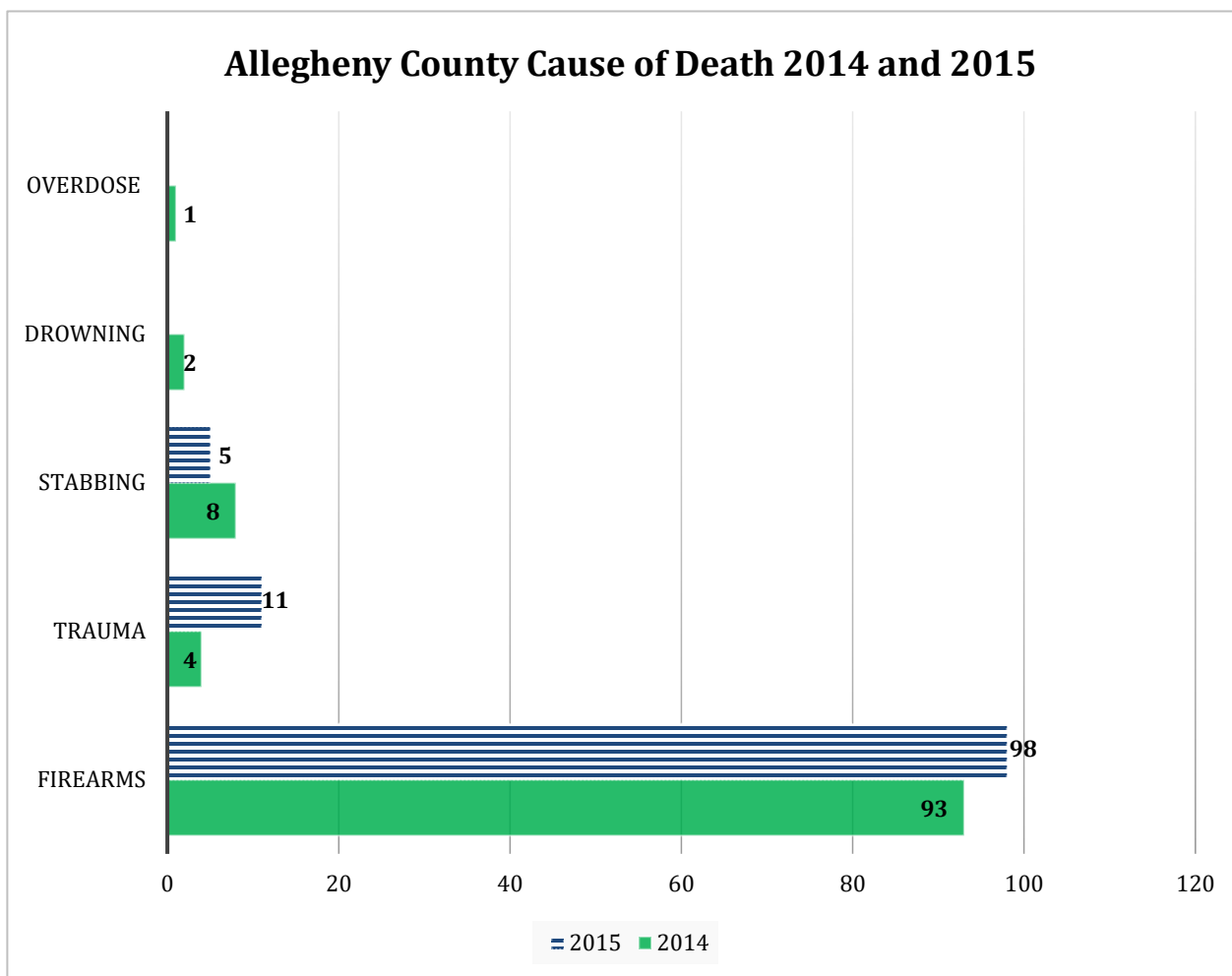


- In Allegheny County in 2014 and 2015, Tuesdays and Saturdays had the highest number of homicides.
- Homicides occurred most often on the weekends in 2012 and 2013, with Friday and Saturday being the most violent days. In 2014 and 2015, Tuesday became one of the days where most homicides occurred.
- In 2015 from Friday to Sunday there were 51 homicides, Monday to Thursday 63 homicides occurred.

Figure 11



- The graph above offers a breakdown of Allegheny County homicides by the time of day in which the incident occurred.
- Homicides most often occurred late at night (9pm to 12am); in 2015 there was a significant 47% increase in 9pm-12am homicides.
- The early morning and weekday work/school periods saw relatively fewer homicides, but were followed by an increase in the evening (3pm to 6pm), and then steadily increased throughout the rest of the evening.



- Since 2012, firearms have remained the most common cause of homicide death in the City of Pittsburgh.
- In 2014 in Allegheny County, firearms were the main cause of death, with 86% (93) of victims killed from a gunshot wound (Figure 12). Eight victims were killed by stabbing, four by blunt force trauma, and one by overdose.
- Not much changed in 2015, with firearms leading as the cause of homicides in Allegheny County. 86% (98) of homicides were caused by a firearm, blunt force trauma went up 6, and stabbings went down 3.
- Blunt force trauma increased from 4 in 2014 to 11 in 2015. Seven out of the 2015 eleven traumas took place in the suburbs; six out of the eleven were domestic or Intimate Partner violence-involved homicides.

Figure 13

Homicide and Victim Characteristics in Allegheny County

Characteristics	2014	2015
Total Number of Homicides	108	114
Location Type		
Street, road, avenue	38	43
House/Home	33	36
Housing Authority Housing	7	5
Apartment building	4	10
Automobile	8	10
Bar, club	7	3
Park, Parking lot, Wooded Area	8	3
Group home, Correctional Facility	0	1
Other (i.e., vacant building, business)	3	3
Residence at time of Death		
Pittsburgh	46	55
Suburbs	29	54
Homeless	1	0
Unknown	32	2
Out of Allegheny County	0	3
Killed in neighborhood of residence	32	55
Others Injured in Incident	4	15
Received DHS Services	66	69

- In 2014 and 2015, 50% of the total homicides occurred indoors, with the majority (30-31%) taking place in a residential unit (i.e., “home” being where the victim resided and “house” being someone else’s home). Housing Authority and Apartment Complexes accounted for 10% in 2014 and 13% in 2015 of indoor homicides, bars and clubs had a decrease.
- 2015 there were 59 homicides in the city and 55 in the suburbs. The suburbs saw an increase of 49%. Three out of the 114 homicide victims lived outside of Allegheny County. 54% of people killed in the neighborhood of residence were killed in their homes.
- The number of people reported injured in the homicide incident besides the homicide victim increased from 4 in 2014 to 15 in 2015.
- The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) provided services for 69 homicide victims. Services can consist of Drug and alcohol, child welfare (as child or parent), SNAP, mental health, and Housing.

Figure 14

<i>Characteristics of homicide Incident</i>	2014 Allegheny County	2015 Allegheny County
Perpetrator/Suspect		
Arrest made	29	55
Deceased (e.g., homicide-suicide)	4	2
Charges pending (e.g., self-defense)	1	2
Unknown	2	52
	1	3

Table 1. Conflict context, definition (Allegheny County, 2015)			
Conflict Context	Victim/Suspect	Known Involvement	Definitions & Clarification
Peer conflict*		• Purposeful, self-motivated	8 4
*Peer- move in the same circle.	No known Involvement	• Peers or individuals with something in common (e.g., avocation, residence, age) with more than a superficial familiarity	1 2
Unintended target		• Conflicts may stem from such things as drugs, money, power, or disrespect, but not gang business.	11 39
Gang/Group related	U.S. Department of Justice gang definition is used, specifically there is:	o Identifiable leadership and internal organization	1 0
Acquaintance, Associate, Friend			
Rival gang member			7 9
Intimate Partner			1 3
Law Enforcement Officer			7 9
Domestic Violence (Relative)			72 49
Unknown			

- Out of the 114 homicide incidents 55 perpetrators were arrested. 2 committed suicide after committing homicide and 3 were law enforcement justified shootings.
- The relationship between victim and perpetrator was known for sixty-six of the cases in 2015. Among these, 4 victims were killed by someone with whom they had no known involvement (either unintended target or mistaken identity), 9 were killed by a spouse or current or former intimate partner, and 49 cases were unclear.
- Over half of all homicide victims had prior interaction with the Allegheny County Department of Human Service (DHS). Prior human service involvement includes instances of referral to services that were not realized. The largest percentage of prior interaction involved behavioral health (mental health and/or substance abuse), followed by the child welfare system, either as a child or a parent.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collective identification by employing a common name, slogan, sign or symbol, style or color of clothing • Conflicts are “gang on gang” or one named gang versus another named gang and may involve such things as turf/territory, intimidation, power, pride and respect, or gang business (e.g., drugs, stolen commerce, firearms, prostitution) • Geographically defined boundaries in Pittsburgh that determine with what gang you should affiliate
Isolated Incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidents that are criminally motivated, but do not involve aspects of a peer or gang-related conflict • Considered an isolated event • Conflicts may stem from such things as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Robbery, home invasion ○ Argument/conflict ○ Contracted killing
Child abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional injury or violence towards a child
Intimate partner/Domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional injury or violence perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner (e.g., boyfriend, girlfriend, wife husband). • Domestic injury or Violence between family members or household affairs.
Non-criminal or unintentional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidents that are not criminally motivated and do not involve aspects of a peer or gang-related conflict • Conflicts may stem from such things as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unintended target ○ No apparent motive ○ Negligence or improper firearm storage ○ Personal protection or self-defense
Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any incidents that involve Law Enforcement
Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown due to incomplete information

Conflict Context Allegheny County	2014	2015
Peer conflict	72	43
Gang-related	3	0

Isolated Incident	12	Figure 16
Intimate partner or Domestic Violence	14	17
Child abuse	4	2
Non-criminal or unintentional	2	2
Law Enforcement	1	3
Unknown	0	33

- In 2014 and 2015, Peer conflict, a “purposeful” and “self-motivated” conflict between peers, or “individuals that have something in common” (e.g., job, residence, age, crowd), was identified as a key determinant or factor. The second leading conflict was IPV and Domestic Violence.
- Law Enforcement involved homicides are increasing not just in Allegheny County but all over the United States and are becoming a national issue. In the past, we labeled law enforcement shootings as Non-criminal or unintentional, under personal protection. In 2015 we had three law enforcement shootings and labeled it as such.

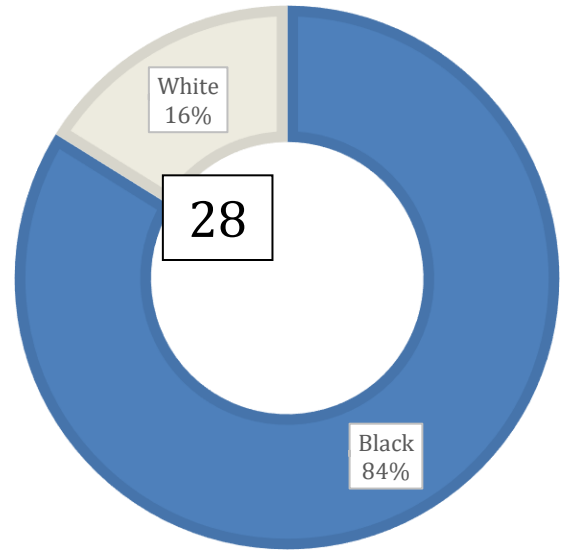
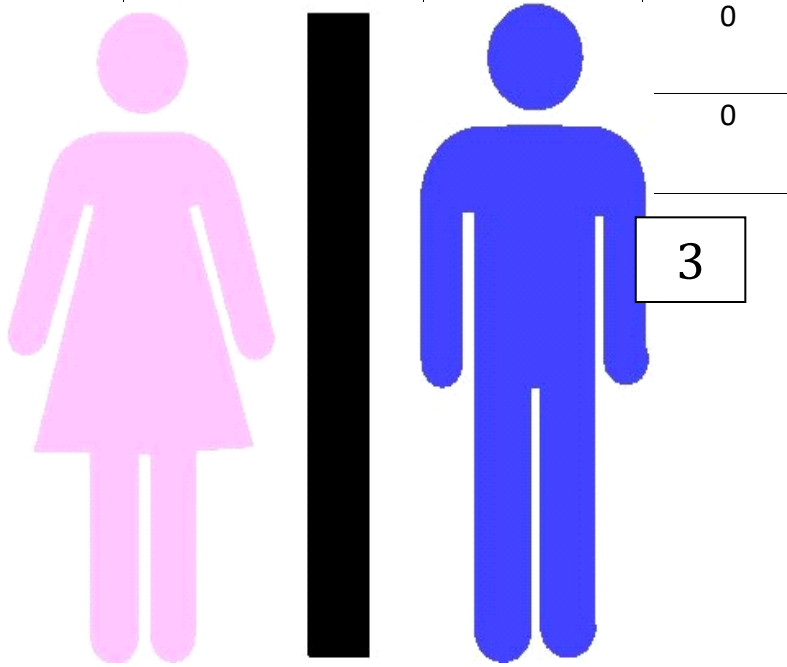
	Age 0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51+
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Allegheny County Homicide Statistics by Gender, Race and Age 2015

Black Males	0	1
White Males	0	0

Figure 17

0	1	1
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Allegheny County Homicide *Suspect* by Gender, Race and Age 2015

Figure 20

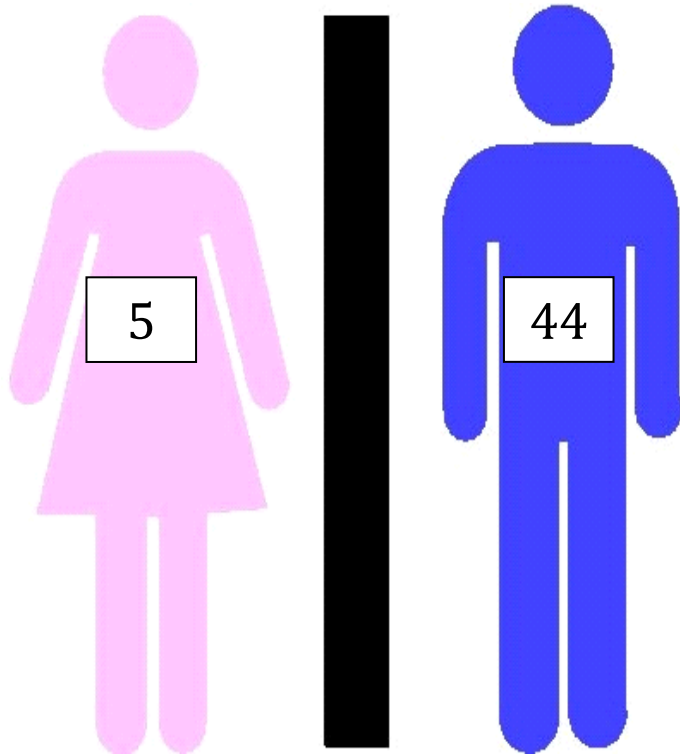


Figure 21

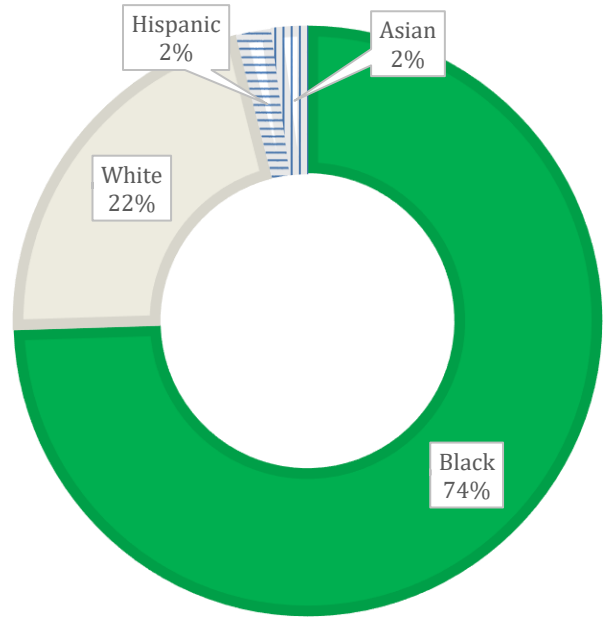
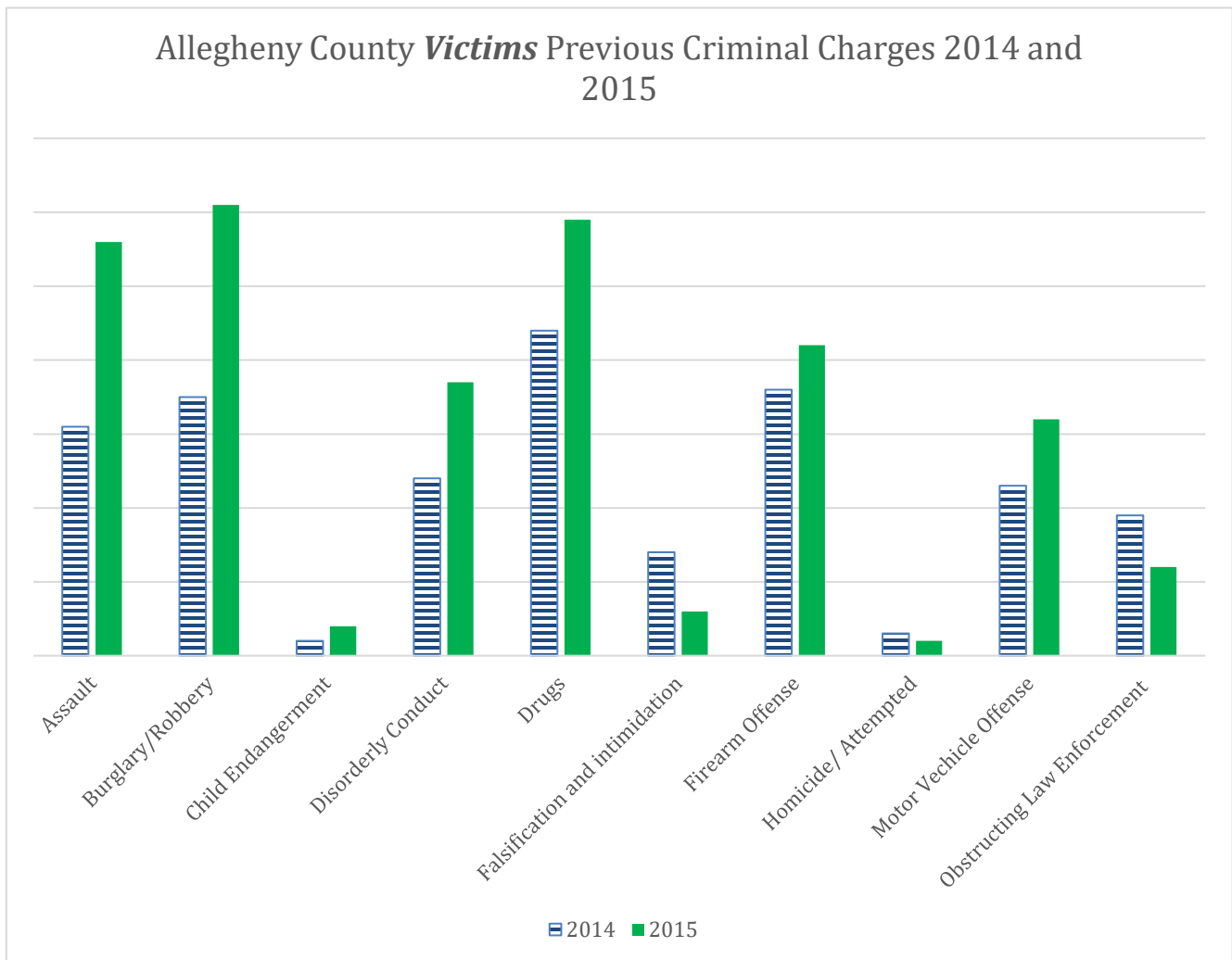


Figure 22

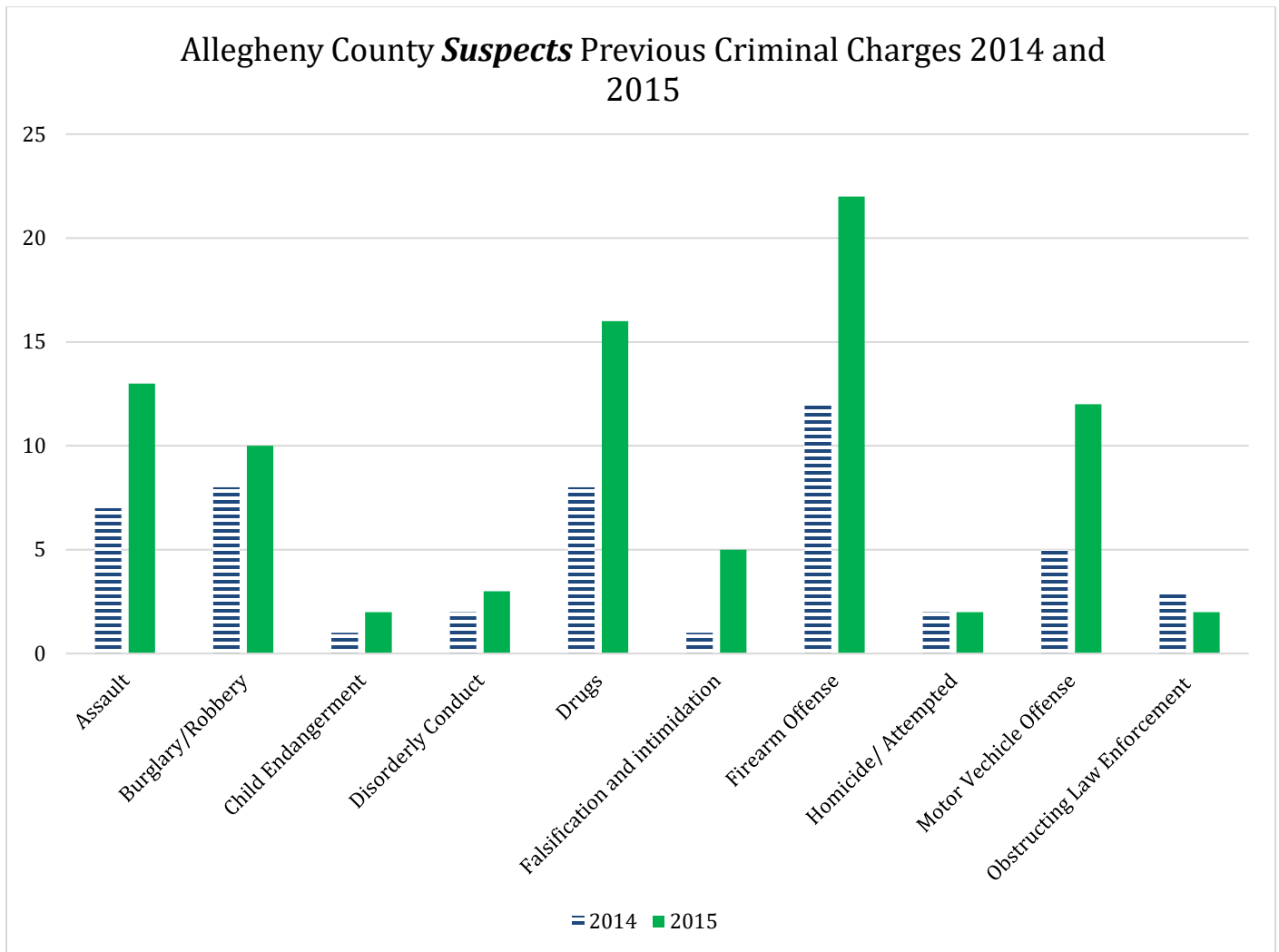
	Age 0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51+
Black Males	0	11	21	1	0	1
White Males	0	1	3	1	2	3
Black Females	0	1	2	0	0	1
White Females	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hispanic Male	0	1	0	0	0	0
Asian Male	0	1	0	0	0	0

Figure 23



- Burglary/Robbery went up significantly in 2015 compared to 2014; 57% of those charges followed with either an assault charge or firearm offense.
- Prior to the homicide, 51% of victims were charged with some type of drug offense (e.g. possession, use or sale).
- These charges are adult charges, 79% of victims had juvenile charges starting as young as 9 years of age.

Figure 24



- There were 49 criminal charges distributed among the 51 suspects in 2015 Allegheny County homicides.
- 43% of the suspect criminal charges were firearm charges; some suspects had more than one firearm charge.
- Suspects and victims often have similar criminal histories, including high percentages of charges related to assault, drugs, firearms, and burglary/robbery.
- Out of the 51 suspects 36 had juvenile backgrounds starting as early as age 11.

Key Contributing Factors

Public information and news outlets often oversimplify intentional injury and homicides in Allegheny County, frequently identifying street gangs and illicit drugs as the source of conflict. Through community engagement and academic-community partnerships, greater contextual information was gathered and homicides were found to involve a variety of factors. Numerous contributing factors were identified and discussed with partners as relevant to homicides from 2015.

Discussion took place around the role of chronic, multigenerational family involvement in violence and illegal activities. This cycle of violence, and its impact on the breakdown of a family unit, was identified as a contributor to a victim's involvement in violence.

The increasing access to and use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) was extensively discussed around homicide cases, particularly social media as an additional opportunity for conflict (i.e., beyond face-to-face arguments). In addition to things such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and twitter social media is beginning to play a larger role in sources of conflict among individuals and future violence and intentional injury. Additionally, drugs, alcohol, and access to firearms were also frequently highlighted as related to the homicides.

Violence as normative behavior and an appropriate form of conflict resolution was discussed as a significant contributing factor to the homicides. A lack of mentoring or positive behavior modeling within families, in addition to a potential familial cycle of violence, as well as within the broader community was identified as relevant in the homicides from 2015.

Four Year Comparison: Emerging Differences

Victim and homicide differences emerged between 2012 and 2013. Female victims represented a larger number of homicides in 2013, (17% of total homicides, of which 50% were related to intimate partner violence). Furthermore, female intimate partner homicides were associated with a variation in cause of death compared to 2012 with 50% due to a gunshot wound, 25% due to poisoning, and 25% due to stabbing.

Age of homicide victim differed between the years, with the majority of victims aged 18 to 25 years in 2012 compared to the majority 35 years or older in 2013,

Firearm charges for victims and suspects before the homicide incidents took place was frequent. There were victims and suspects with more than one firearm charge. We noticed that more and more on our lists were charged with firearm violations, more than 50% of our victims and suspects.

Data on victim's neighborhood of residence at time of death illustrates that in the four years approximately one quarter of 2015 Allegheny County homicide victims were living outside of city limits at time of death.

Recommendations

The complexity of homicide and intentional injury prevention has become increasingly clear over the past three years of project activities. In order to be effective, a range of interventions need to take place at multiple levels. The remainder of this report outlines recommendations from partners that incorporate information and insight gained in 2015. Some of the recommendations are similar to those made following the review of homicides from 2012-2015, illustrating the improvements that still need to take place. Divided into *Individuals and Peers at Risk, Service Improvement, and Community Action*, the recommendations identify potential opportunities to further understand, increase awareness, and prevent and respond to violence impacting Allegheny County communities.

Individuals and Peers at Risk

- **Identify and involve the support network of at-risk individuals.** Natural supports are key assets in encouraging an individual's engagement, commitment, and success in health and behavior programs. Natural supports play a critical role in the well-being and safety of individuals at risk for violence through their support and advocacy and should be identified and engaged in violence prevention and intervention activities.
- **Reach out and engage those at risk for violence who are not currently involved in a mandated health or behavior program.** Due to regulations of local health and behavior programs (e.g., juvenile court, PIRC), individuals who are not under mandated involvement, but who may be at risk for violence, are unable to access services that may be of benefit. Emphasis needs to be on engaging and linking these individuals at multiple points of contact (e.g., primary care clinics, community-based organizations, after school programs) to appropriate health and behavior programs.

Service Improvement

- **Enhance linkages between behavior, health, and social programs and systems.** Continuity between behavior, health, and social systems is crucial. Linkages between systems should be improved to avoid any interruption in use or loss to follow-up.
- **Focus on engagement.** Individuals, particularly youth, may be more willing to participate in community health and social programs if they are engaged, rather than identified as needing a particular service. Getting the children of homicide victims more involved in community activities and keeping them actively busy, would be a valuable investment
- **Modify participation requirements.** Community adolescent or youth programs often require a parent/guardian's signature or payment in order to participate. These requirements eliminate potential participants who are unable to provide either a signature or payment. Program modifications or exceptions to participation requirements would ensure that all interested adolescents have a chance to participate, and overall, increase their access to a supportive community.
- **Adapt structure of service delivery in community settings.** Community stigma and distrust of certain institutions are significant barriers to access and utilization of existing health and social services. Health and social service organizations should adapt their structure of service delivery to include non-traditional methods (e.g., having more men and women walking neighborhoods) to not only increase awareness and program participation, but also better understand why current services are not being utilized and combat stigma and distrust.
- **Increase communication and coordination among organizations concerned with violence prevention efforts.** Numerous organizations are currently working with individuals and families at risk for violence or around local violence prevention efforts. Increased communication and coordination between these organizations would promote earlier intervention with individuals with an increased risk of victimization, as well as foster a larger network of individually tailored violence prevention efforts.

Community Action

- **Combat attitudes of violence as normative behavior and an appropriate form of conflict resolution.** The normalization of violence exists within Pittsburgh families and communities, and overall, supports a cycle of violence. Increase anti-violence initiatives that combat such attitudes; promote positive behavior modeling for children, youth, and young adults; and teach and encourage appropriate conflict resolution strategies.
- **Improve and strengthen community-police relations.** Poor community-police relations negatively impact and undermine violence prevention efforts. Increased trust, respect, and accountability between both groups is essential in order to work toward creating safe communities.
- **Distribute anti-violence and homicide awareness, education, and prevention materials throughout Pittsburgh.** Homicide and community violence information should be distributed throughout communities, local government and county agencies, and local media. Through increasing awareness and knowledge of homicide prevalence, greater attention and discussion can take place around the urgency for more effective prevention efforts.
- **Increase community participation and investment in violence prevention efforts.** Numerous community organizations, groups, and coalitions are already providing anti-violence awareness, education, and prevention throughout Allegheny County. Local governmental agencies, academic institutions, and community assets (e.g., barbershops and beauty salons, religious institutions, funeral homes) should support these existing efforts, so that a broad coalition to confront the violence problem impacting our communities can be created.

Community Recommendations

- **Enhance data collection efforts.** Toxicology reports conducted by the medical examiner's office, victim's social media presence, and prior residence information, as well as information on surviving children and other family members, would allow for an improved review of homicides. Additionally, data collection efforts should be expanded to better account for the unique factors involved in intimate partner homicides, such as history of abuse, including Protection from Abuse (PFA) filings and prior police-involved incidents; history of substance abuse; weapons in the home; use of community resources; and previous use of mental health and other behavioral health services by perpetrator.
- **Increase police involvement.** Collaboration for the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Police and County police and their involvement and representation in homicide review meetings is crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of homicides within Allegheny County. Their commitment and participation may also foster improved community relations.
- **Disseminate findings through multiple methods.** Findings should be disseminated widely, including non-traditional methods such as public safety meetings, as well as shared with neighborhoods and communities impacted by violence to encourage community engagement and dialogue around appropriate intervention and prevention efforts.
- **Track initiative involvement.** It is important to keep track of the diverse violence prevention initiatives around Allegheny County and to observe their impacts on the homicide rate. Bringing representatives from these initiatives to the table to share with all homicide review members is essential; they may also assist in disseminating information to the community.

Community Resources

Center for Victims

5916 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
(412) 482-3240
24 hour crisis hotline 1-866-644-2882

Community Empowerment Association

Arts, Culture, & Training Center
7120 Kelly Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15208
(412) 371-3689

First United Methodist Church

1406 Cornell Street
McKeesport, PA 15132
(412) 672-5352

Department of Human Services

1 Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 350-5701

Hill House Association

1835 Centre Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 392-4400

Hosanna House

807 Wallace Avenue
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
(412) 243-7711

Manchester Citizens Corporation

1319 Allegheny Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
(412) 323-1743

National Council for Urban Peace and Justice

P.O. Box 99746
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
(412) 606-0059

One Hood Media

info@1hood.org
(412) 404-2347

The Pittsburgh Project

2801 North Charles Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15214
(412) 321-1678

The Corner Pittsburgh

200 Robinson St
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 683-1400

Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh

610 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

YMCA Homewood

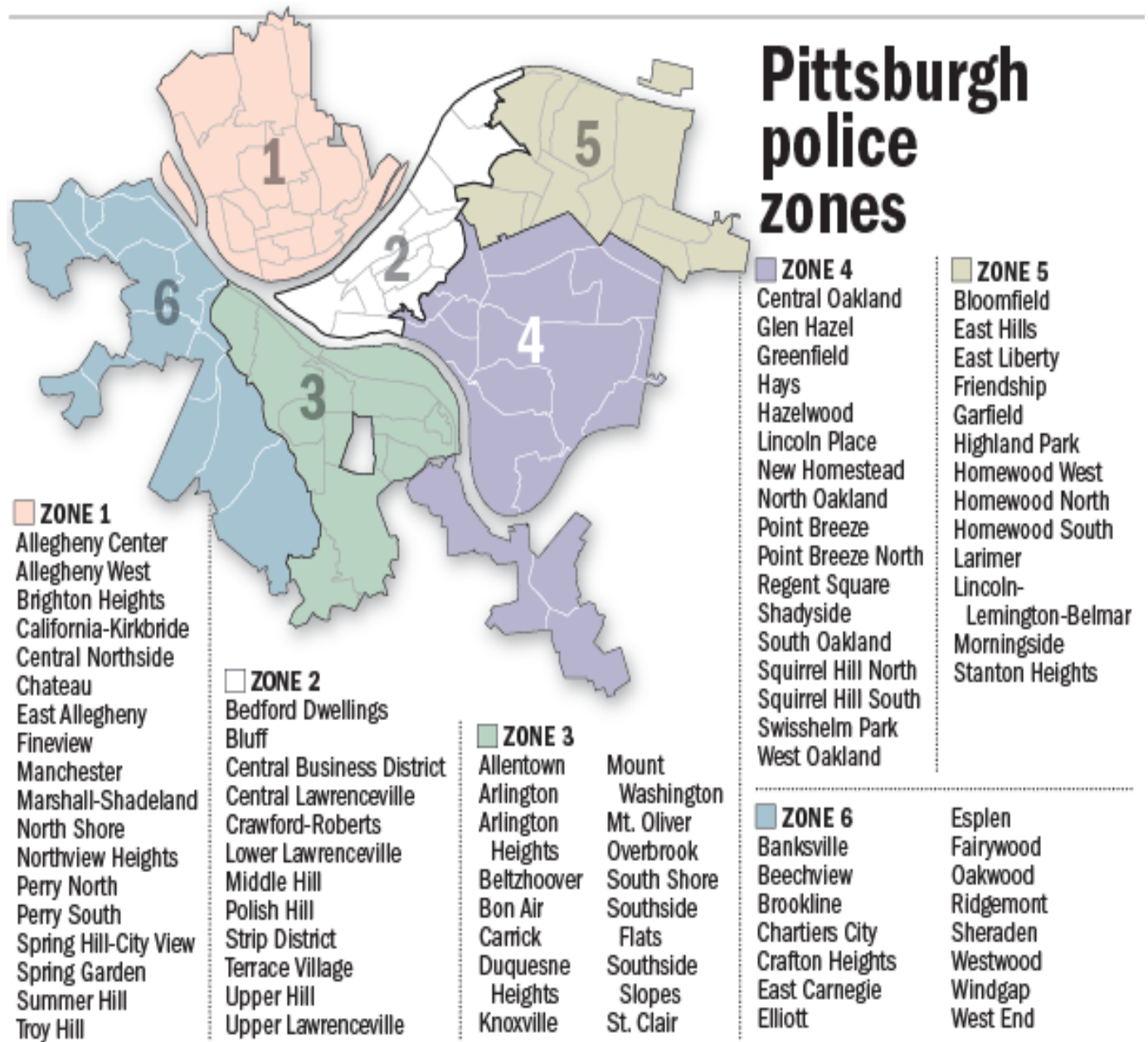
7140 Bennett Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15208
(412) 243-2900

Kingsley Association

6435 Frankstown Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
(412) 661-8751
kingsleyassociation.org

Appendix A. Pittsburgh Bureau of Police Zone Map

Appendices



Source: Pittsburgh Bureau of Police

James Hilston/Post-Gazette

Appendix B. Bibliography

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