

CHICAGO CRIME TRENDS

Gang-Motivated Murders .. 1991 — 2004

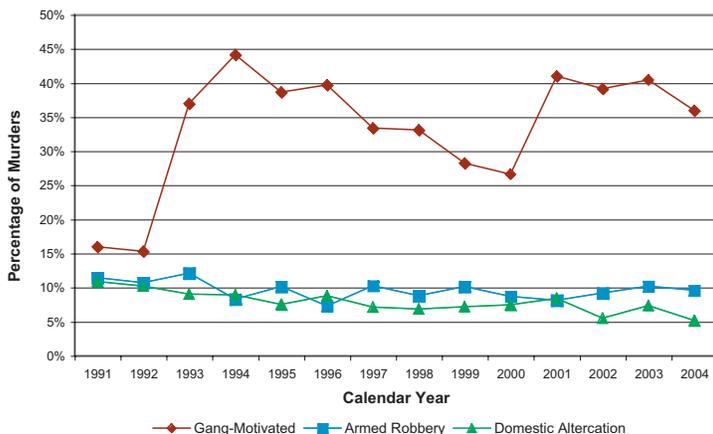
Chicago Crime Trends is a series of reports describing recent trends in selected crime topics. The topic of this issue is gang-motivated murders.

This article provides overall and demographic trends in Chicago gang-motivated murders from 1991 to 2004. The findings presented in this article are based on victim-level data pertaining to all murders known to the Chicago Police Department. The victim-level data is collected and maintained by the Chicago Police Department's Detective Division. The Detective Division determines a motive category for every murder, and includes this information in their database. Gang-motivated murders are those in which a gang-related motive was assigned.

OVERALL TRENDS IN GANG-MOTIVATED MURDERS, 1991-2004

From 1991 to 2004, there were 3,422 gang-motivated murders in the City of Chicago. This constituted 33.0% of the murders that occurred in Chicago during this time period. Excluding instances when the Detective Division could not determine a motive, gang activity was the most common murder motive from 1991 to 2004, followed by armed robbery (1,007 murders, or 9.7%), and domestic altercations (843 murders, or 8.5%). Figure 1 shows trends in the percentage of murders attributed to these three motives.

Figure 1: Trends in the Percentage of All Chicago Murders Attributed to Three Motive Types – 1991-2004

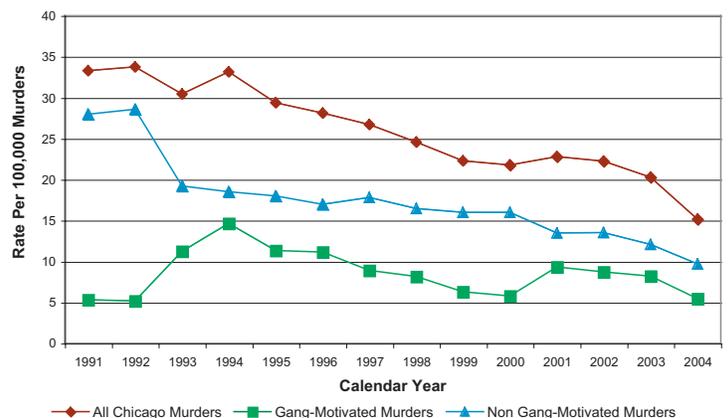


As can be seen in Figure 1, there was more fluctuation over time in the percentage of gang-motivated murders than in the percentage of murders resulting from armed robberies or domestic altercations. There was a significant increase from 1992 to 1993 in the percentage of gang-motivated murders.¹ Since this time, the percentage decreased significantly from 1993 to 2000, increased significantly from 2000 to 2001, then remained stable.

In contrast to gang-motivated murder percentages, there was a significant decrease from 1991 to 2004 in the percentage of murders resulting from domestic altercations. The percentage of murders resulting from an armed robbery did not significantly change from 1991 to 2004.

Figure 2 shows trends in the overall Chicago murder rate, gang-motivated murder rate, and rate for all other murders.² The rates in the figure provide an indication of murder risk for each of the three types of murders, based on the size of the Chicago population. The figure shows that the overall Chicago murder rate has been the by product of both gang-motivated murders and all other murders. However, since 1993, upward and downward trends in the overall Chicago murder rate appear to have more closely approximated upward and downward trends in the gang-motivated murder rate.

Figure 2: Gang-Motivated and Non-Gang-Motivated Murder Rates vs. Overall Chicago Murder Rate – 1991-2004



**Table 1:
Demographic Profile – Gang-Motivated
Murder Victims and Offenders – 1991-2004**

	ALL VICTIMS	VICTIMS — GANG MEMBERS	VICTIMS — NON-GANG MEMBERS	ALL KNOWN OFFENDERS
AVERAGE AGE	23.6	22.3	27.3	20.7
AGE				
14 and Under	3.7%	2.1%	11.3%	2.8%
15-19	31.8%	34.6%	20.6%	47.8%
20-24	31.0%	36.1%	18.2%	32.2%
25-29	15.1%	16.1%	12.1%	11.0%
30-34	8.1%	7.0%	9.1%	3.6%
35-39	4.7%	2.5%	11.3%	1.6%
40 and Over	5.6%	1.7%	17.4%	1.0%
RACE				
African American	70.0%	68.8%	61.9%	69.0%
Hispanic	26.5%	28.5%	30.3%	27.5%
Caucasian	3.3%	2.5%	7.2%	3.1%
Other	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.4%
SEX				
Male	93.1%	98.1%	75.3%	99.0%
Female	6.8%	1.9%	24.7%	1.0%

**DEMOGRAPHICS - GANG-MOTIVATED
MURDER VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS**

Table I shows the age, race, and sex of gang-motivated murder victims and known offenders (N=3,762), aggregated from 1991-2004. Victim data are separated into three categories: all victims (N=3,422), victims who were known gang members (N=1,849), and victims who were known not to be gang members (N=373).

VICTIM AGE

The three age groups with the most gang-motivated murder victims were 15-19 year olds (1,087 victims from 1991 to 2004), 20-24 year olds (1,062 victims), and 25-29 year olds (518 victims). Figure 3 shows, for each year from 1991 to 2004, the percentage of all murders involving victims in these age groups that were gang-motivated. These percentages provide information on the prevalence of gang activity as a cause of murders of younger persons in Chicago. From 1991 to 2004, gang-motivated murders constituted 55.3% of the murders of 15-19 year olds, 43.7% of the murders of 20-24 year olds, and 25.7% of the murders of 25-29 year olds.

**Figure 3: Percentage of Murders That Were
Gang-Motivated by Victim Age Group – 1991-2004**

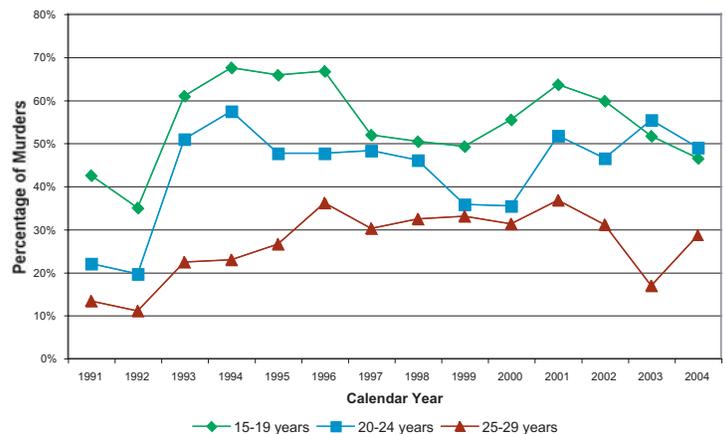
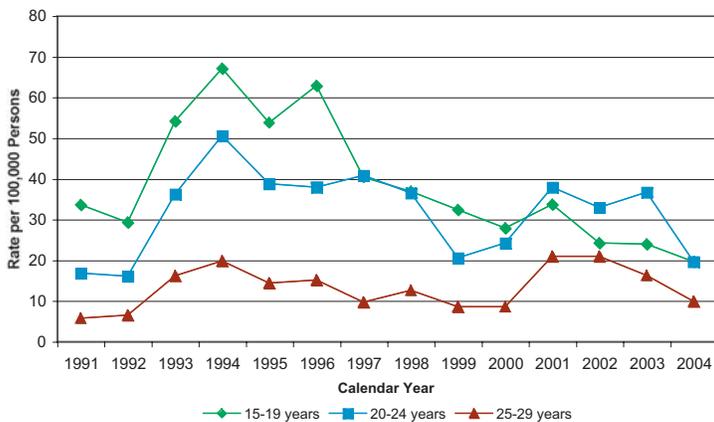


Figure 3 shows that, in absolute terms, there was fluctuation throughout the time period examined for all three age groups. For all three age groups, there were statistically significant increases from 1992 to 1993. However, statistical analyses indicated that, since 1993, the percentages did not significantly change. For all three age groups, the percentage of murders stemming from gang activity has remained consistent since 1993.

On the other hand, the population-based risk of persons in the three age groups being murdered as a result of gang activity has decreased in recent years. Figure 4 shows gang-motivated murder victimization rates for the three age groups. The gang-motivated murder victimization rates for 15-19 year olds decreased nearly every year since 1996. The decrease from 1996 to 2004 was significant. Rates for 20-24 year olds fluctuated throughout the time period examined, but there was a significant drop from 2003 to 2004. Similarly, rates for 25-29 year olds fluctuated, but there was a significant decline from 2002 to 2004.

Figure 4: Gang-Motivated Murder Victimization Rates by Victim Age Group – 1991-2004

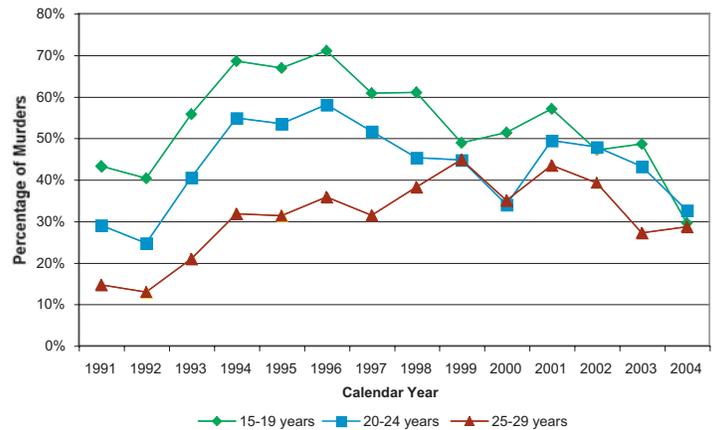


OFFENDER AGE

Of the 3,762 known gang-motivated murder offenders from 1991 to 2004, 1,796 were 15-19 year olds, 1,210 were 20-24 year olds, and 413 were 25-29 year olds. Figure 5 shows, from 1991 to 2004, the percentage of known murder offenders in each of these age groups who committed a gang-motivated murder. These percentages show the extent to which murders committed by younger persons stem from gang activity. From 1991 to 2004, gang-motivated murders constituted 55.7% of the murders committed by 15-19 year olds, 43.6% of the murders committed by 20-24 year olds, and 29.9% of the murders committed by 25-29 year olds.

As can be seen in the figure, the percentage for all three age groups increased significantly from 1992 to 1994. After 1994, results differed by age group. For 15-19 year olds and 20-24 year olds, the percentage significantly decreased from 1994 to 2004. On the other hand, for 25-29 year olds, the percentage did not significantly change from 1994 to 2004.

Figure 5: Percentage of Murder Offenders Who Committed a Gang-Motivated Murder by Offender Age Group – 1991-2004



VICTIM RACE/ETHNICITY

From 1991 to 2004, there were 2,383 gang-motivated murders involving African-American victims, 908 involving Hispanic victims, and 112 involving Caucasian victims. Victim race/ethnicity was broken down by the three most common victim age groups (see Figure 6).³ Relative to Caucasian victims and Hispanic victims, a greater percentage of African-American victims were between 20-24 years of age.⁴

Figure 6: Percentage of Gang-Motivated Murder Victims by Three Common Age Groups and Victim Race/Ethnicity, 1991-2004

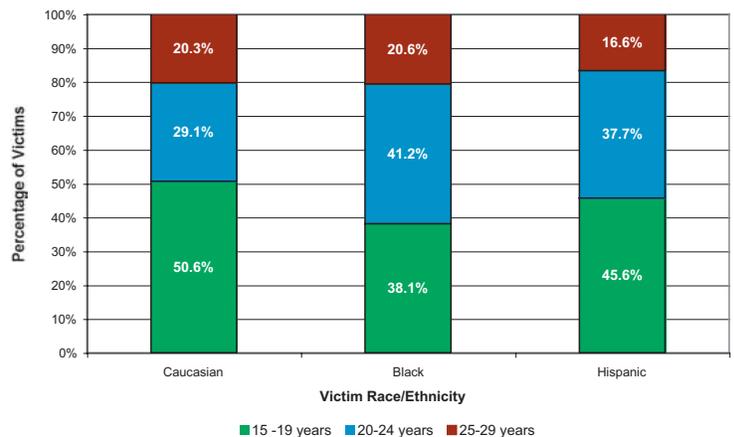
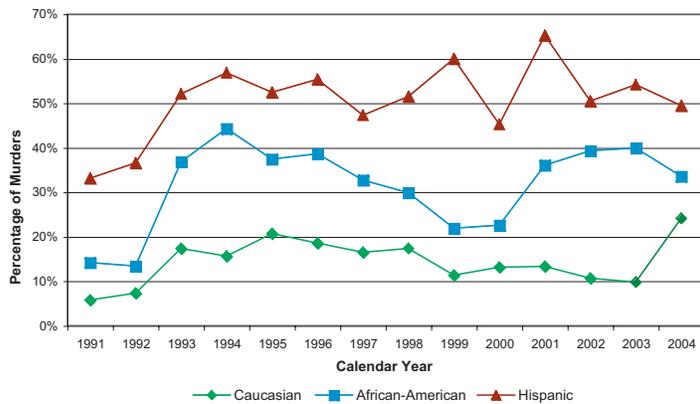


Figure 7 shows, from 1991 to 2004, the percentage of all murders involving Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic victims that were gang-motivated. These percentages show the extent to which murders of persons in each of

these racial/ethnic groups were gang-motivated. Overall, from 1991 to 2004, 13.8% of the murders involving Caucasian victims were gang-motivated, 31.0% of the murders involving African-American victims were gang-motivated, and 51.1% of the murders involving Hispanic victims were gang-motivated.

Figure 7: Percentage of Murders That Were Gang-Motivated by Victim Race/Ethnicity – 1991-2004

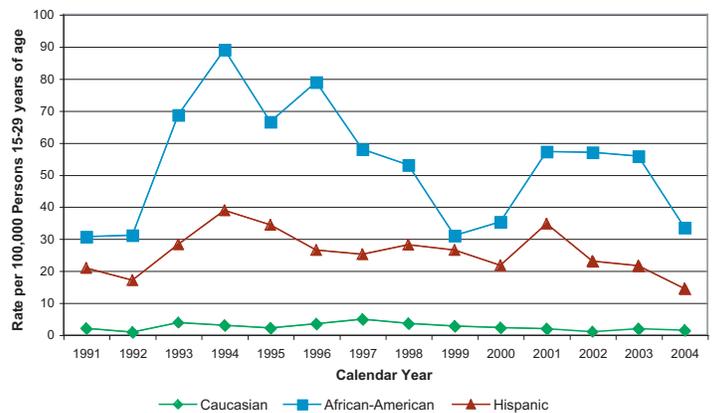


The figure shows that, in absolute terms, there was fluctuation over time in the percentage of gang-motivated murders by race/ethnicity. However, since 1993, percentages did not tend to significantly differ over time. The one exception to this was that, relative to other years from 1993 to 2004, percentages for African-Americans were significantly lower during 1999 and 2000.

In addition, for every year examined, the percentage of Hispanics who were murdered as a result of gang violence was higher in absolute terms than the percentage of African-Americans and Caucasians murdered as a result of gang violence. Statistical analysis indicated that, across the time period examined, the percentage of Hispanics who were murdered as a result of gang violence was significantly higher than the percentage of Caucasians. For each year from 1998 to 2001, the percentage of Hispanics who were murdered as a result of gang violence was significantly higher than the percentage of African-Americans who were murdered as a result of gang violence. For these years, even though greater numbers of African-Americans were murdered as a result of gang violence, these numbers constituted a smaller percentage of all African-American murder victims when compared to the Hispanic percentage. On the other hand, from 2002 to 2004, there were no significant differences between Hispanic percentages and African-American percentages.

Gang-motivated murder rates for African-Americans between the ages of 15 and 29 fluctuated from 1991 to 2004 (Figure 8). The rates decreased significantly from 1994 to 1999, increased significantly from 2000 to 2001, then decreased significantly from 2003 to 2004. On the other hand, gang-motivated murder rates for Caucasians and Hispanics did not significantly change across the time period examined. For most of the time period examined, gang-motivated murder rates for African-Americans were significantly higher than rates for Caucasians or Hispanics.

Figure 8: Gang-Motivated Murder Victimization Rates for Persons 15-29 years of age by Victim Race/Ethnicity – 1991-2004



Notes

¹ Statistical analyses were conducted in most instances when trends are presented showing rates or percentages. The analyses were based on the calculation of standard errors, which were used to create boundaries around rates or percentages. The boundaries indicate the range of totals that the rate or percentage could have been, simply based on the natural fluctuation of numbers. Changes from one year to the next that fall within the boundaries of natural fluctuation are "not significant". Changes that fall outside the boundaries of natural fluctuation are "significant". For the most part, the report states when statistical analyses were conducted. However, readers should infer that a statistical analysis was conducted in every instance when the terms "significant" or "not significant" are used. Interested readers can refer to Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998) for a more detailed application of this approach.

² Rate = (Total x 100,000) / Population. Chicago population totals were provided by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development and are based on population figures supplied by the U.S. Census Bureau.

³ Very few gang-motivated murders involved victims who were not African American, Caucasian, or Hispanic. For this reason, all other racial/ethnic groups were excluded from analyses conducted by race/ethnicity.

⁴ A chi-square test for independence examining victim race/ethnicity by victim age group was statistically significant. This indicates that victim race/ethnicity is not independent from victim age group. An examination of the percentages in Figure 6 suggests that this was because African-American victims tended to be older.

References

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1998). *Displaying violent crime trends using estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey* (Technical Report). Washington, DC: Maltz, M.D., and Zawitz, M.W.