

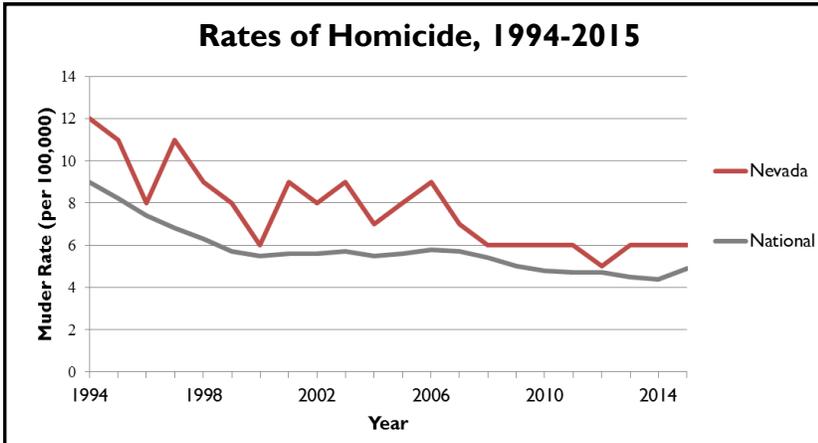
## Homicide Trends in Nevada, 1994-2015

By Matthew P. West

Although the murder rate in Nevada has trended upward in recent years, it is still lower than the rate in 1994. This study looks at characteristics of homicides in Nevada and in the nation.

### Key Stats

1

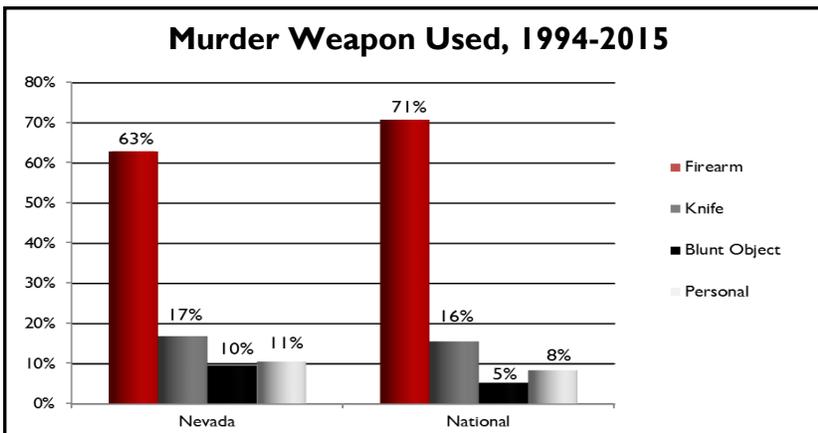


Source: FBI, 2016

**The Nevada murder rate was higher, but, less stable, than the national rate from 1994 to 2015.**

Over the past two decades, there was an average of 7 murders reported for every 100,000 people in Nevada. This was slightly above the national average of 6 murders per 100,000. In general, the murder rate has decreased in Nevada and nationally since 1994. However, preliminary data (not displayed) shows an uptick in recent years.

2

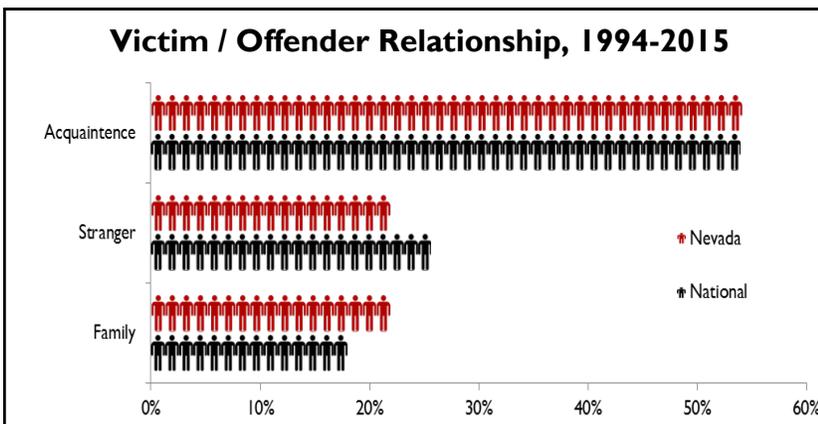


Source: Puzzanchera et al., 2017

**The majority of reported murder offenses from 1994 to 2015 were committed with a firearm.**

From 1994 to 2015, the pattern of weapon use is similar in Nevada and nationally. While firearms clearly were the weapon of choice in Nevada and the United States overall, blunt objects and personal weapons (i.e., hands, feet, or fists) were used more in Nevada than nationally.

3



Source: FBI, 2016; NDPS, 2017

**Murder offenses are most likely to involve acquaintances.**

Consistent with the national trend, in Nevada offenders and victims were acquaintances in over half (56%) of murder offenses committed during the past two decades. However, Nevada homicides were more likely to involve family members (22%; national rate = 18%) and less likely to be committed between strangers (22%; national rate = 26%) than the national average.

## Understanding Homicide in Nevada

Approximately 16,000 murders were reported to the police in the U.S. in 2015 (FBI, 2016). Both in Nevada and nationally, the murder rate has decreased since 1994 (see Figure 1), but preliminary data (not included in Figure 1) shows a slight upward trend in recent years.

Over the past two decades, there was an average of 176 reported murders per year in Nevada. The lowest number of murder offenses reported was 118 (2012) and the highest number reported was 229 (2006). There was an average of seven murder offenses reported for every 100,000 people in Nevada from 1994 to 2015. This was slightly above the national average of six murders per 100,000.

Most murders at the national level involved acquaintances (56%), followed by strangers (26%), and family members (18%). This pattern has been stable over the past two decades. Nevada's homicide pattern is somewhat similar. Most murder offenses from 1994 to 2015 involved acquaintances (56%). In contrast to the national pattern, the proportions of murder offenses involving strangers and family members were equal (22%; Puzanchera et al., 2017).

Nationally, from 1994-2015, about 80% of murders were committed with a firearm, 16% with a knife, 5% with a blunt object, and 8% with hands, fist, or feet (Puzanchera et al., 2017). During the same time period, murder offenses in Nevada exhibited a similar pattern with firearms (63%) the primary weapon of choice, but were slightly more likely to be committed with a knife (17%), a blunt object (10%), and hands, fists, or feet (11%), compared to the national profile (Puzanchera et al., 2017).



## Data Sources and Limitations

The primary limitation of this data is that it is based on official reports. Many important details of homicide offenses (e.g., victim-offender relationship) cannot be ascertained because many homicide offenses are never cleared—a crime is typically regarded as cleared when an offender is identified, arrested, and there is sufficient evidence to charge the offender. Solving stranger-based homicides often presents greater challenges for law enforcement because there are fewer leads to go on, compared to cases involving acquaintances or family members. Future CCJP research will focus on identifying and understanding contextual characteristics of homicide patterns.

**For references in this Stat Sheet, see the CCJP website: [www.unlv.edu/CCJP](http://www.unlv.edu/CCJP)**

*Stat Sheets* are produced by the Center for Crime and Justice Policy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The Center is housed in the Department of Criminal Justice, which is located in the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs. *Stat Sheets* provide summaries of various criminal justice system practices in Nevada and other states.