

# Violence in the City of Pittsburgh, 2015

JULY 2016

This brief provides an analysis of acts of violence reported to the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Police in 2015 and compares it with the five-year trend described in *Violence in the City of Pittsburgh: 2010 through 2014*.

## Homicides and Other Types of Violence

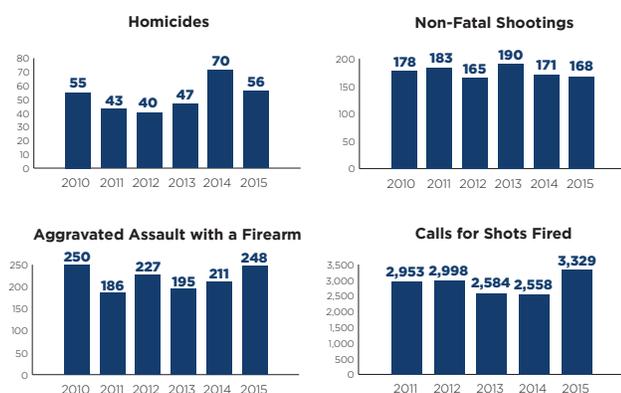
The number of homicides in the City of Pittsburgh, which reached 70 in 2014, decreased to 56 in 2015. While homicides receive the most media attention, other types of violence — non-fatal shootings, aggravated assaults with a firearm and calls for service for shots fired — are far more frequent. In 2015, for every homicide there were three non-fatal shootings, nearly five aggravated assaults with a firearm, and nearly 60 calls for shots fired.<sup>1</sup>

## Trends

While homicides and shootings decreased in 2015, aggravated assault with a firearm and calls for shots fired increased (Figure 1). Over the five-year period from 2010 through 2014, there were an average of:

- 51 homicides per year. In 2015, homicides increased ten percent over this average but decreased from an historic high of 70 in 2014.
- 177 shootings per year. In 2015, shootings decreased five percent from this average.
- 214 aggravated assaults with a firearm. In 2015, aggravated assaults with a firearm increased 16 percent from this average.
- 2773 calls for shots fired (average from 2011 through 2014; see footnote 2). While calls for shots fired increased 20 percent over this average in 2015, some of this increase may be the result of increased reliability of the data rather than an actual increase. In 2015, ShotSpotter became fully functional in Pittsburgh's East End neighborhoods. ShotSpotter is highly efficient at collecting accurate information on shots fired, which is then channeled through the dispatch system and to officers. From 2014 to 2015, neighborhoods with ShotSpotter had a higher percentage increase (62%) than those without ShotSpotter (24%).

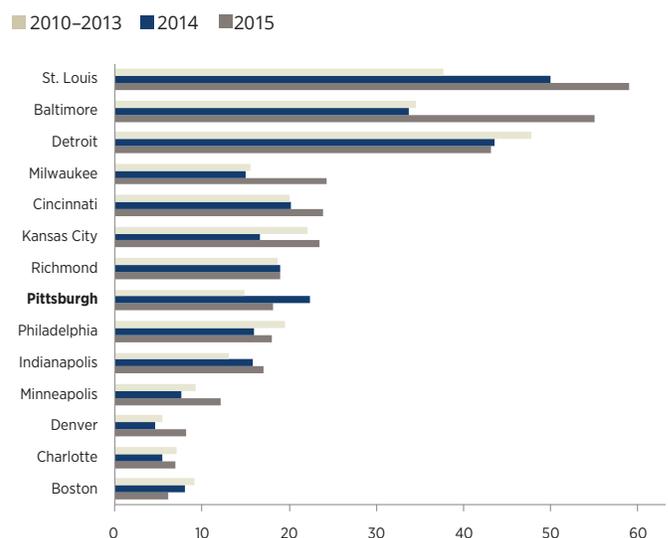
FIGURE 1: Violence Trends in Pittsburgh, 2010 through 2015<sup>2</sup>



## Comparison to Benchmark Cities

Pittsburgh's homicide rate remains comparable to that of *Pittsburgh Today* benchmark cities.<sup>3</sup> Its rate of 18.2 homicides per 100,000 population in 2015 was slightly below that of the overall rate across all 14 cities (Figure 2). Pittsburgh was one of only three benchmark cities whose homicide rate decreased from 2014 to 2015.

FIGURE 2: Homicides, Pittsburgh and Benchmark Cities, 2010 through 2015



## Homicide Victims

The demographic characteristics of homicide victims in 2015 were consistent with those of earlier years.

**Gender:** 47 of 56 victims (84%) in 2015 were male, compared to 87 percent (221 of 255) from 2010 through 2014. The 2015 homicide rate for males, 30 per 100,000 population, was five times that of females (six per 100,000 population).

**Race:** 49 of 56 victims (88%) in 2015 were black, compared to 85 percent (217 of 255) from 2010 through 2014. In 2015, the homicide rate for black victims (67 per 100,000 population) was 22 times that of white victims (three per 100,000 population).

**Age:** Young adults were more likely to be homicide victims than other age groups. In 2015, 33 of 56 (59%) homicide victims were 18 through 29 years old; from 2010 through 2014, 120 of 255 (47%) were in that age group. In 2015, the median age of homicide victims was 25; from 2010 through 2014, it was 27.

**Offenders**

Of the 56 homicides in Pittsburgh in 2015, 24 (43%) were cleared, compared to 34 of 70 (49%) in 2014.

Of the 24 cleared homicides in 2015, 20 involved only one offender, while four involved two or more offenders. Altogether, there were 32 offenders arrested for homicides committed in 2015.

**Gender:** 30 of 32 offenders (94%) in 2015 were male.

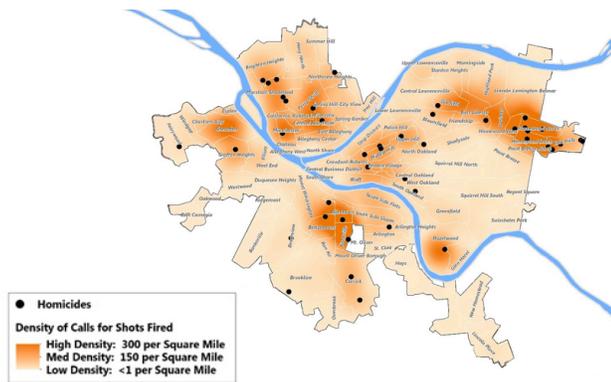
**Race:** 27 of 32 offenders (84%) in 2015 were black; there were also three Hispanic offenders, one white offender and one Asian offender.

**Age:** 25 of 32 offenders (78%) in 2015 were 18 through 29 years old; the median age of offenders was 24.

**Where Did Violence Occur?**

Five neighborhoods — Homewood North, East Hills, Perry South, Marshall-Shadeland and Crawford Roberts — accounted for 21 of 56 (38%) homicides in 2015. Calls for shots fired were clustered most heavily in three areas; the East End from Homewood to Garfield, the North Side and Knoxville/Allentown.

**Figure 3: Homicides and Density of Calls for Shots Fired, City of Pittsburgh, 2015**



**When Did Violence Occur?**

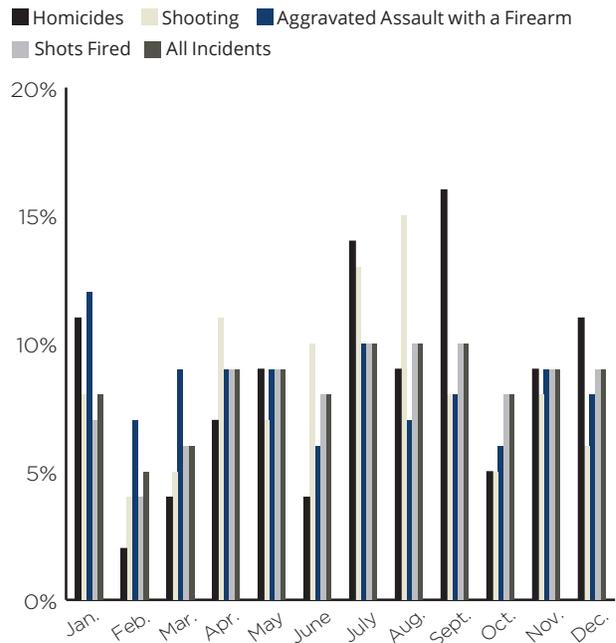
The summer months of 2015 — July through September — saw somewhat more violence than other times of the year (Figure 4). These months saw 39 percent of homicides, 36 percent of non-fatal shootings, and 30 percent of reports for shots fired, although only 24 percent of aggravated assaults with a firearm. From 2011 through 2014, approximately 30 percent of each type of violent incident occurred in these months.

<sup>1</sup> Homicides, non-fatal shootings and aggravated assaults with a firearm are distinct events. Aggravated assaults with a gun includes only those incidents in which the gun was fired.

<sup>2</sup> Because the current Allegheny County Computer-aided Dispatch CAD system has been in place only since August 2010, data comparison for 2010 is not considered to be reliable.

<sup>3</sup> <http://pittsburghtoday.org/>

**Figure 4: Pittsburgh Violence by Month, 2015**



Similar to previous years, violence was somewhat more pronounced on weekends than on other days of the week. Saturdays and Sundays combined saw 32 percent of homicides, 34 percent of non-fatal shootings, 30 percent of aggravated assaults with a firearm and 36 percent of shots fired in 2015.

Violence was most pronounced during the evening and midnight hours (Figure 5). The hours between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m. marked the time of 64 percent of homicides, as well as 67 percent of shots fired, 58 percent of non-fatal shootings and 57 percent of aggravated assaults with a firearm. By contrast, the hours from 4 a.m. to noon were least violent. Similarly, from 2011 through 2014, the hours from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. were the most violent and those from 6 a.m. to noon the least violent.

**Figure 5: Pittsburgh Violence by Time of Day, 2015**

