



## Review of **Homicide Crime Statistics**

### **Data Information and Limitations**

Homicide is defined by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program as the "willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another." The homicide category comprises murder and nonnegligent manslaughter. Attempted murder, justifiable homicide, manslaughter by negligence, and suicide are excluded. Data for this file are collected via the Supplemental Homicide Report (form BCS15). The following information and limitations should be considered when interpreting and using data from the Homicide File.

1. The number of reported homicides represents known victims.
2. The Orange County Sheriff's Department and its contract cities experienced unintended under-reporting of Part 1 crimes for 2000, 2001 and 2002. The effect on homicide counts is unknown.
3. Homicide crimes can be cleared by arrests or "exceptional means." An offense is cleared or "solved" for crime reporting purposes when at least one person is arrested, charged with the commission of the crime, and turned over to the court for prosecutions or referred to juvenile authorities. In certain situations a clearance may be counted by "exceptional means" when the police definitely know the identity of the offender, have enough information to support an arrest, and know the location of the offender but for some reason cannot take the offender into custody.
4. Counts for the "domestic violence" category in the Contributing Circumstance variable reflect 1) homicides submitted to the CJSC from law enforcement agencies as domestic violence-related, and 2) homicides interpreted by the CJSC as domestic violence-related based on available information, including victim/offender relationship. Recent examination of homicide data indicate that ambiguity in the interpretation of what constitutes a domestic violence-related incident may have resulted in an undercount in this category. Further examination of these data by the CJSC will determine if an undercount has occurred and the extent to which it has occurred.
5. The offender in the "victim/offender relationship" is actually a suspect at the time of reporting. No follow-up is made to verify that the identified suspect actually committed or was adjudicated of the crime.
6. The subjectivity of the classification and labeling process must be considered in the analysis of race/ethnic group data. As commonly used, race refers to large populations which share certain similar physical characteristics such as skin color. Because these physical characteristics can vary greatly within groups as well as between groups, determination of race is frequently, by necessity, subjective. Ethnicity refers to cultural heritage and can cross racial lines. For example, the ethnic designation "Hispanic" includes persons of any race. Most commonly, self-identification of race/ethnicity is used in the classification and labeling process.