



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER**

401 E Street, SW – 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20024



**Firearm-Related Homicides and Lethality: January 1, 2017 to June 1, 2019<sup>1</sup>**

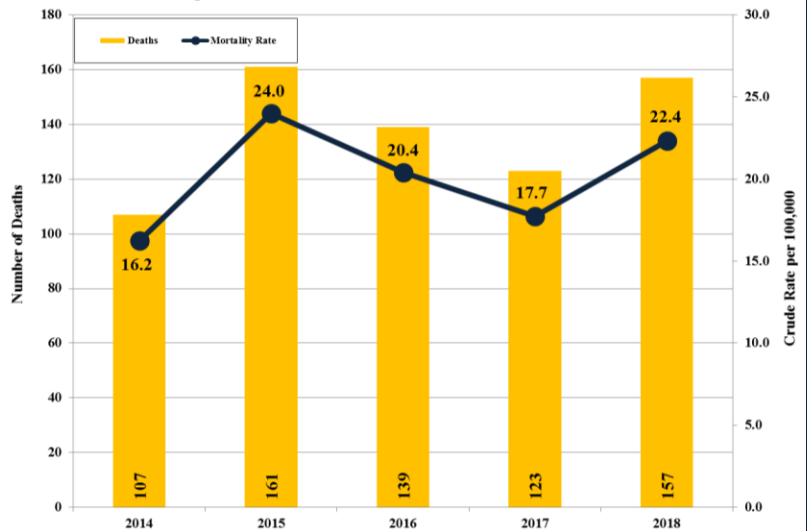
Report Date: June 21, 2019

The DC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) investigated a total of **342<sup>1</sup>** deaths due to homicides from January 1, 2017 through 2019 Year-to-Date (YTD): **123** deaths in Calendar Year (CY) 2017 and **157** in CY 2018, and **62** deaths respectively as of 2019 YTD. Below is a breakdown of the homicides by cause of death and demographics, with a particular focus on firearm-related fatalities as **255** homicides (74%) between 2017 and 2019 YTD were due to firearm injuries. The data presented within this report represents deaths occurring exclusively within the District of Columbia. The data does not represent ALL deaths of DC residents. The decedent’s place of residence or location of injury may be outside of the District.

**Trends in Homicides**

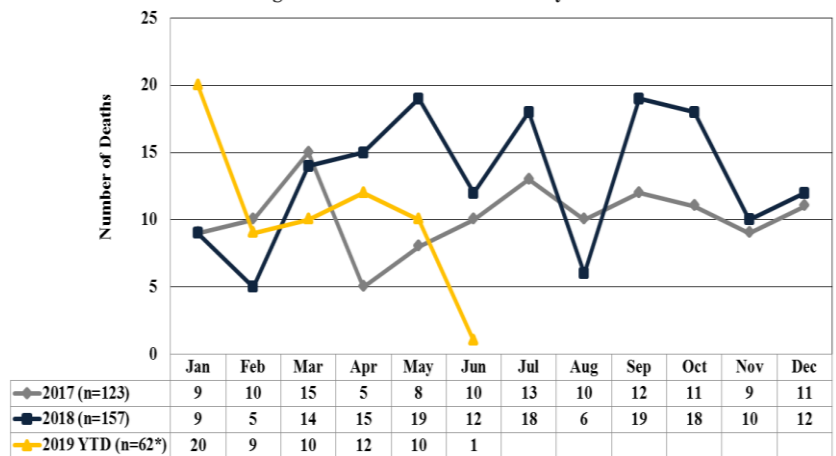
Although homicides spiked in 2015, there was a steady decrease in the number of homicides between 2015 and 2017. In 2018, the number of homicides increased by 28% compared to 2017 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Five Year Trend in Homicides, 2014-2018



When examining homicides over the past couple of years, the number homicides per month has increased since 2017 (Figure 2). In 2017, there was an average of 10 homicides per month. However, the number of homicides per month increased to an average of 13 per month in 2018. The total number of homicides from January to May of 2019 is equal to the total number of homicides during the same period of time of 2018.

Figure 2: Number of Homicides by Month and Year



\*Numbers within year is "Year-To-Date" or YTD and is subject to change upon investigation findings or incoming of new or reviewed cases

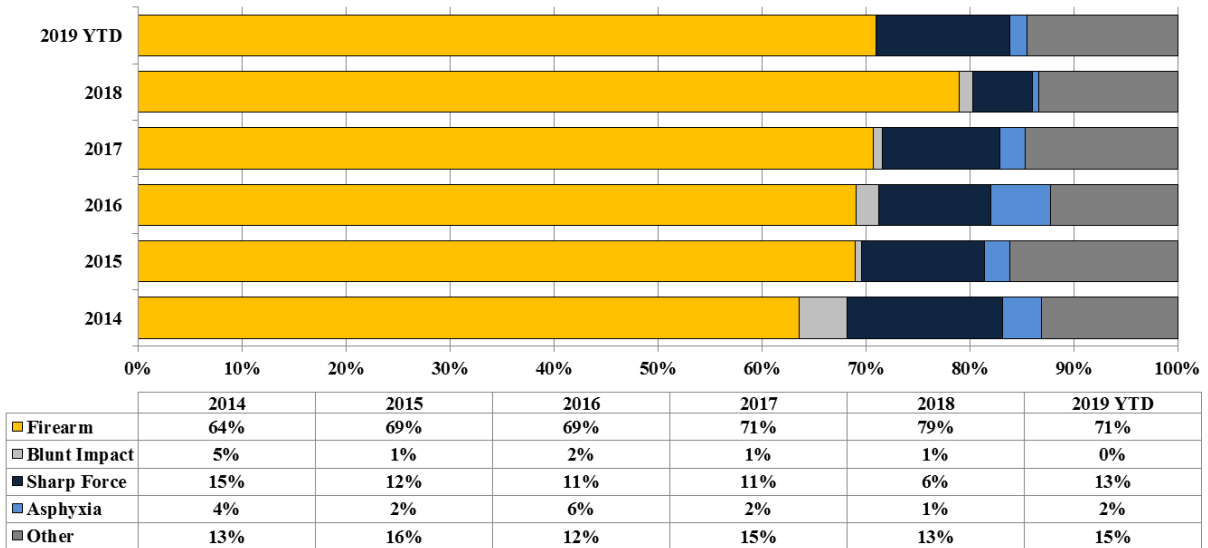
<sup>1</sup> Data for 2019 is inconclusive and subject to change due to cases where cause and manner of death is "Pending Further Investigation"



### Cause of Death in Homicides by Year

Over a six year period, the percentage of firearm-related homicides has increased from 64% in 2014 to 79% in 2018 (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: 6 Year Trend of Homicides by Cause of Death and Year**

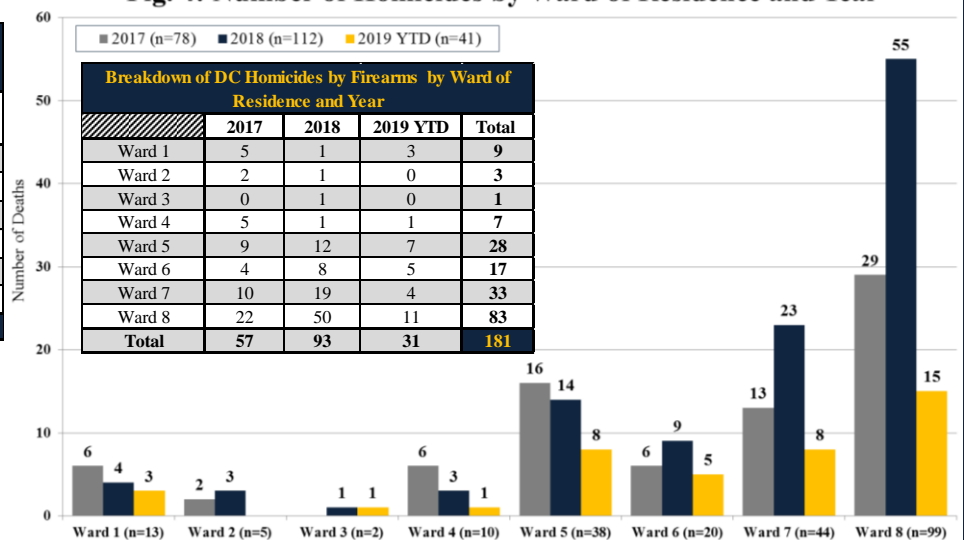


### Jurisdiction of Residence

Between 2017 and 2019 YTD, 231 decedents or 67% of the homicides were DC residents (Table 1). Wards 5, 7 and 8 have consistently had the most homicides across all years (Figure 4). In addition, Ward 8 had the highest percentage of homicides by firearm (84%) than any other ward between 2017 and 2019 YTD.

**Fig. 4: Number of Homicides by Ward of Residence and Year**

Table 1: Breakdown of All Homicides by Jurisdiction of Residence and Year				
	2017	2018	2019 YTD	Total
DC	78	112	41	231
MD	27	31	7	65
VA	5	3	0	8
Other	3	2	1	6
Unknown	7	9	13	29
Undomiciled	3	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>342</b>



## Demographics

### Age

Approximately **60%** of all homicides happened among adults between the ages of 20-39 years old (Figure 5a). Homicides were most prevalent among people ages 20 to 29 (n=39%). The prevalence of firearm-related homicides among decedents age 20 to 29 varies by year (Figure 5b). In 2017, 37% of all firearm-related homicides were among decedents age 20 to 29, however, the percentage of firearm-related homicides among that age range increased to 55% in 2018.

### Race/Ethnicity

Overall, **298** or **87%** of all homicides were among Blacks (Figure 6). This trend remains consistent across years. The trend also remains true for firearm-related homicides, with 87% to 94% of the firearm-related homicides occurring among Blacks.

### Gender

Homicides were more common among **males**. In addition, firearm-related homicides were also more common among males. Females were more likely to die from non-firearm related homicides (Figure 7). Given the small number of homicides among women (22 in 2017 and 18 in 2018), the percentages observed in firearm and non-firearm-related homicides among females are sensitive to small differences in the number of deaths per year.

Figure 5a: Number of Homicides by Age and Year

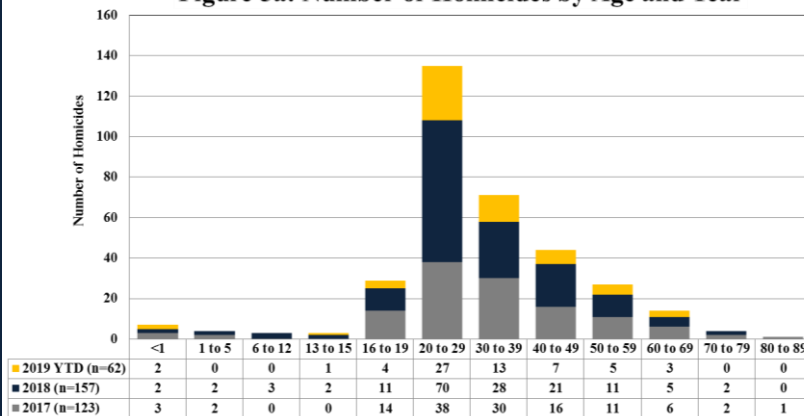
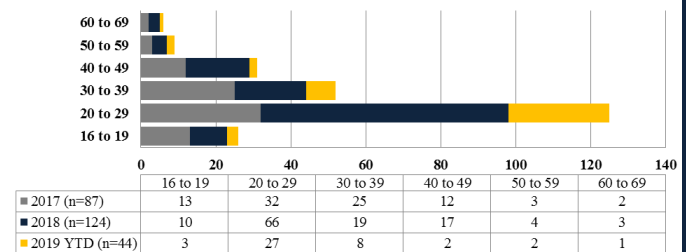


Figure 5b: Firearm-Related Homicides Among the Most Prevalent Age Categories by Year



\*Legend reflecting the sum of total homicides by year (e.g. n=x) includes other ages not displayed in this graph.

Figure 6: Number of Homicides by Race/Ethnicity and Year

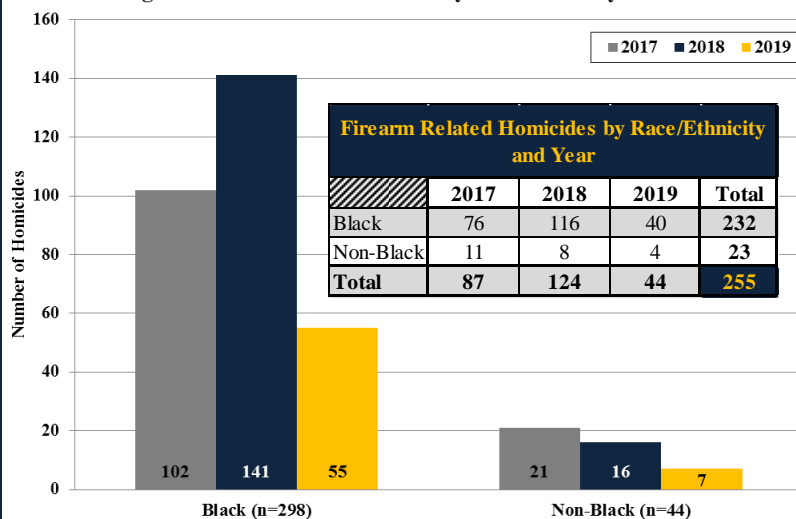
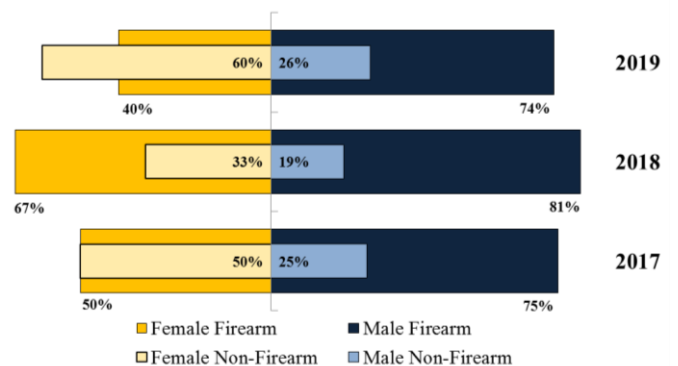


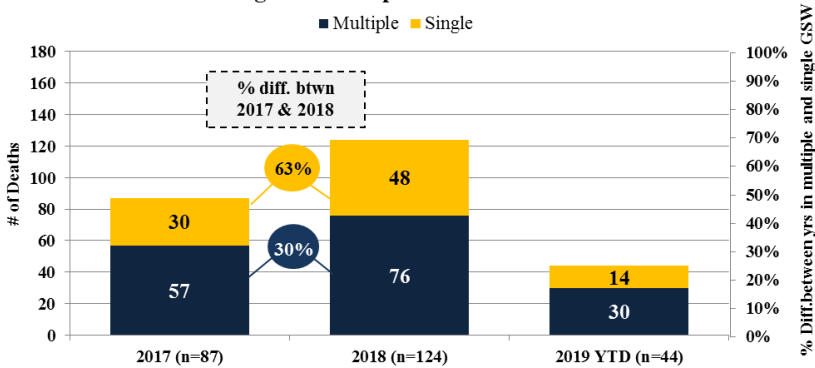
Figure 7: Comparison of Non-Firearm vs Firearm Related Homicides by Gender and Year



## Location and Details of Gunshot Wounds

When examining the firearm-related homicides, both multiple and single gunshot wounds increased significantly between 2017 and 2018, **30%** and **63%** respectively (Figure 8). Among multiple gunshot wound homicides, the average number of gunshot wounds increased from **5.33** in 2017 to **6.38** in 2018 (Figure 9). There were more gunshot wounds to the head than any other part of the body (Table 2). Approximately, **50%** of all firearm-related homicides between 2017 and 2019 YTD had a gunshot wound to the head. This report includes 16 firearm-related homicides (6%) where the date of injury occurred a year or more prior to the date of death. For example, a decedent may have been shot in 2015 and died in 2017. Overall, firearm-related homicides have increased in number and lethality.

**Figure 8: Firearm-Related Homicides between 2017-2019: Single vs. Multiple Gunshot Wounds**



**Table 2: Breakdown of Location of Single GSWs in 2017 and 2018**

	2017	%	2018	%
Abdomen	2	7%	1	2%
Back	5	17%	6	13%
Chest	4	13%	7	15%
Head	17	57%	23	48%
Neck	0	0%	5	10%
Shoulder	1	3%	1	2%
Torso	1	3%	5	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 9: Average Number of Wounds in Homicides Due to Multiple Gunshots by Year**

