An Analysis of Austin, Texas Homicide: Offenses, Victims, and Suspects in 2018

Prepared by the Austin Police Department
Crime Analysis Unit
September 6, 2019

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS 2

INTRODUCTION 3

UCR CRIMINAL HOMICIDE DEFINITIONS 3

ABOUT THE DATA 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

STATISTICAL REPRESENTATION 5

HOMICIDE DATA 5
HOMICIDE TOTALS BY YEAR 5
HOMICIDE TOTALS BY MONTH 6
HOMICIDES BY DAY OF THE WEEK 6
HOMICIDES BY TIME OF THE DAY 7
HOMICIDES BY DAY OF WEEK & TIME OF THE DAY 7
HOMICIDES BY AREA COMMAND 8
HOMICIDES BY LOCATION – POINT MAP 9
HOMICIDES BY TYPE OF PREMISE 10
TYPES OF WEAPONS USED 10
Homicides by Weapon – Point Map 11
HOMICIDE MOTIVES 12
Homicides by Motive – Point Map 13
VICTIMS & SUSPECTS 14
HOMICIDES BY AGE 14
Homicides by Victim Age – Point Map 15
Homicides by Suspect Age – Point Map 16
HOMICIDES BY GENDER 17
HOMICIDES BY RACE/ETHNICITY 17
Homicides by Victim Gender – Point Map 18
Homicides by Suspect Gender – Point Map 19
Homicides by Victim Race/Ethnicity – Point Map 20
Homicides by Suspect Race/Ethnicity – Point Map 21
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIM AND SUSPECT 22
MISCELLANEOUS VICTIM AND SUSPECT INFORMATION 22
Homicides by Relationship – Point Map 23
FAMILY VIOLENCE, CONTRIBUTING FACTORS, OFFENSE CLASSIFICATION 24
Alcohol Related Homicides – Point Map 25
Drug Related Homicides – Point Map 26
HOMICIDE CLEARANCE RATE 27
Homicides by Clearance Status – Point Map 28

Introduction

The following data reflects all non-negligent murder cases reported to the Austin Police Department for 2018. Negligent homicides and officer involved shootings were not included. This report is meant as a descriptive summary of the homicide specifics and characteristics within Austin city limits. Data sources include U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States 2017*, Texas Department of Public Safety's *2017 Crime in Texas Report*, City of Austin demographic information, Versadex (APD's record management system), APD Homicide Unit's log, and case jacket information directly maintained by detectives assigned to each case.

Since the release of the 2018 versions of the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States* and the Texas Department of Public Safety's *Crime in Texas* are typically not released until September, comparison to 2017 data was used for this report. These numbers are provided as a way to put Austin's murder numbers into a broader context. The Department of Justice discourages ranking agencies on the sole basis of UCR data, so further comparison between jurisdictions should include in-depth analysis of the many variables that affect crime.

UCR Criminal Homicide Definitions

According to the *Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook*, two categories of murder are included for UCR purposes. The first, Criminal Homicide – Murder and Non-negligent Manslaughter, is defined as the willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another. Included in this category is any death resulting from a fight, argument, quarrel, assault or commission of a crime. The second category, Criminal Homicide – Manslaughter by Negligence, is defined as the killing of another person through gross negligence. Not included as criminal homicide are deaths resulting from suicides, fetal deaths, traffic fatalities, or justifiable homicides. Justifiable homicides include the killing of a felon by a peace officer in the line of duty and the killing of a felon, during the commission of a felony, by a private citizen. Attempts at murder and assault with intent to kill are recorded under Aggravated Assaults.

Police investigations are the sole basis for the offense classification. Any determinations made by courts, medical examiners, juries, or other judicial bodies are excluded for UCR purposes.

About the Data

AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT DATA DISCLAIMER

Understanding the following conditions about crime information tallied from the Versadex mainframe database will allow you to get the most value out of the data provided:

- Due to methodological differences in data collection, different data sources or reports may produce different statistics.
- The data is continuously being updated. The data provided represents a particular point in time and does not reflect the dynamic nature of the Versadex mainframe database.
- The data here may not reflect official Texas DPS, FBI UCR or NIBRS numbers.
- If the information provided here is used outside the department, then the following disclaimer applies-

  "The Austin Police Department cannot assume any liability for any decision made or action taken or not taken by the recipient in reliance upon any information or data provided."

Executive Summary

The following summation may be made from the 2018 homicide data as of August 15, 2019.

- There were 32 homicides in Austin in 2018 for a rate of 3.4 murders per 100,000 population.
- The most active months for murder were March and September with six murders each and June with five murders.
- Seven (22%) homicides occurred in Edward sector, five (16%) occurred in Charlie sector, and five (16%) also occurred in Frank sector. These three sectors account for a total of 54% of 2018's homicides.
- Twelve (37%) of the homicides occurred at a single-family residence, apartment, or extended stay motel. Of those, eight occurred inside the residence or apartment or motel room.
- A gun was used in 20 of the 32 murders, accounting for 63% of the weapon types used in the 2018 murders.
- A bomb was used in two of the 32 murders and these were committed by the same suspect.
- Fourteen (44%) of the 2018 murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Seven (22%) of the cases met the legal requirements for family violence.
- A total of 32 victims and 37 suspects were documented for the 2018 murders.
- Fourteen (44%) of the victims were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Twenty-three (62%) of the known suspects were between the ages of 20 and 39.
- Twelve (38%) of the homicide victims in 2018 were White, eleven (34%) were Black, and nine (28%) were Hispanic.
- The race/ethnicity was known for 35 of the 37 suspects - 12 (32%) of the homicide suspects were White, 12 (32%) were Hispanic, and 11 (30%) were Black.
- In the 31 cases in which the suspect's relationship to the victim was established, at least one suspect was an acquaintance in 18 murders (56%). The suspect was a family member or significant other in seven cases (22%).
- Six of the total 32 murders (19%) are considered stranger-on-stranger murders.
    - These murders include cases in which the victim was chosen at random (including 2 bombings, a shooting spree, and a drive-by shooting) as well as cases in which the victim and suspect were brought together by a location (such as a bar or parking lot) or an activity (such as buying drugs, prostitution, or gambling).
    - As of August 15, 2019, five of the known stranger-on-stranger murders have been solved – three have been cleared by arrest and two were cleared exceptionally (death of offender). A drive-by shooting case is still unsolved.
- Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in seven (22%) of the homicides. All of these robberies were drug related and two of them were committed by the same suspect.
- Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 19 (59%) of the homicides. Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 44% of the 2017 homicides.
- As of August 15, 2019, 29 of the 32 murders in 2018 have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for a 91% clearance rate.

Statistical Representation

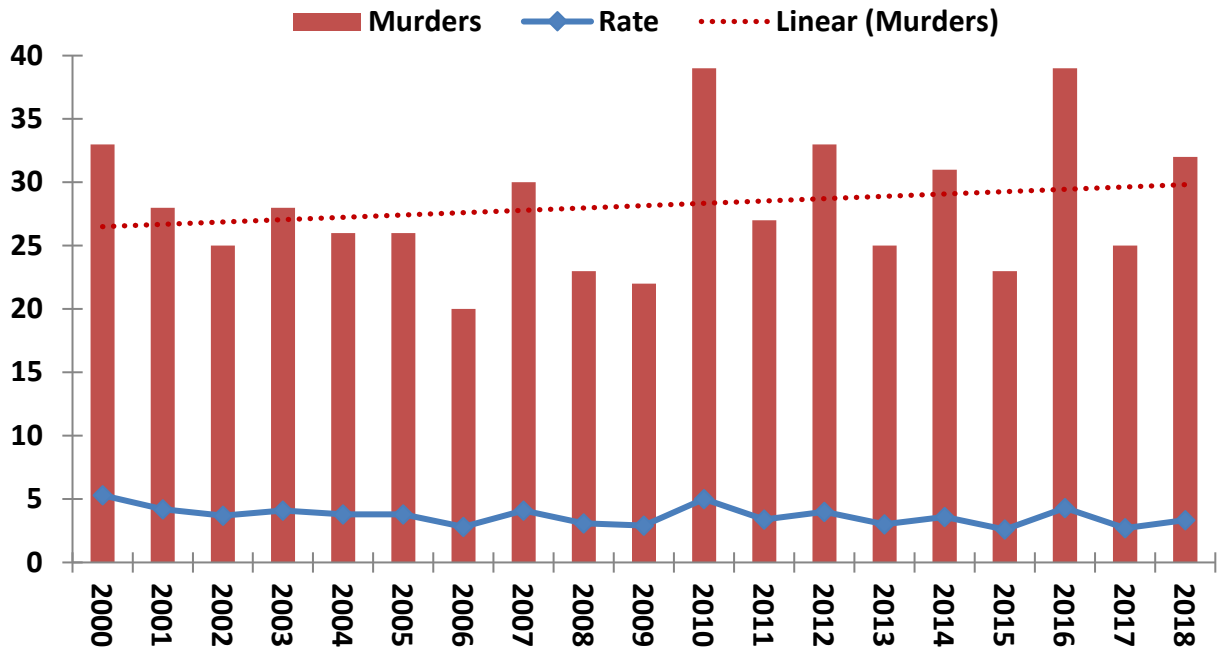
Homicide Data

- The analysis contained in this report was based on 2018 homicide data as of August 15, 2019. Only intentional homicides (non-negligent homicides) were included in the analysis.

Homicide Totals by Year

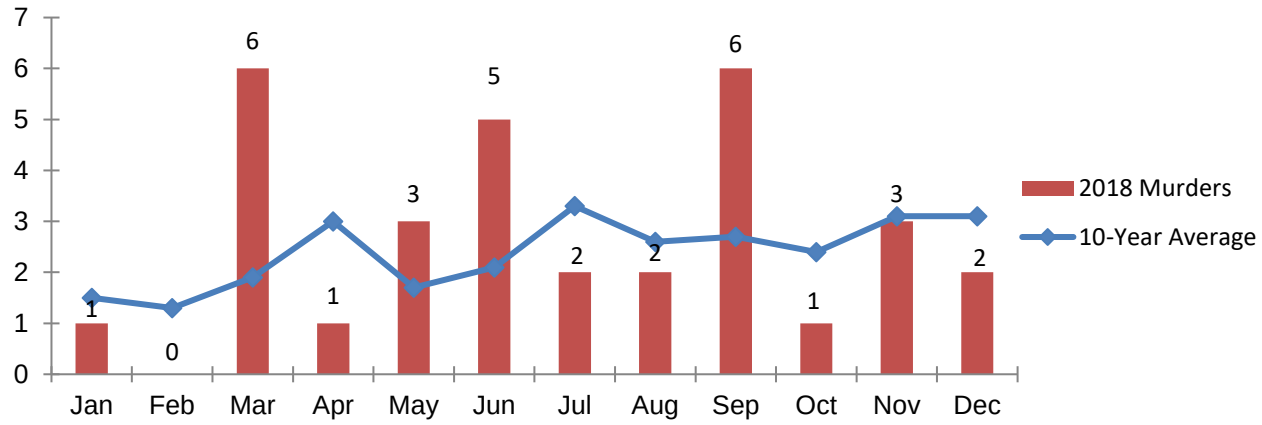
- There were 32 homicides documented in Austin, Texas in 2018. Using a population estimate of 955,094, this calculates to a rate of 3.4 murders per 100,000 population.
- In 2017, there were 25 homicides in Austin, 2.7 murders per 100,000 population.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States 2017* report:
  - The homicide rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 13.4 per 100,000 population.
  - The rate for the South Region was 6.4 per 100,000 population. The South Region includes: the South Atlantic states of Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia; the East South Central states of Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee; and the West South Central states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.
    - The rate for the West South Central sub-region was 6.2 per 100,000 population.
  - The rate for all of the United States was 5.3 per 100,000 population.
- According to the Texas Department of Public Safety's *2017 Crime in Texas Report*, the homicide rate for all of Texas was 5.0 per 100,000 population.
- Austin's homicide rate per 100,000 population has remained at or below 5.0 since 2001 although the actual number of murders show a slight increase during this time frame.

Austin, TX Homicides and Rates by Year



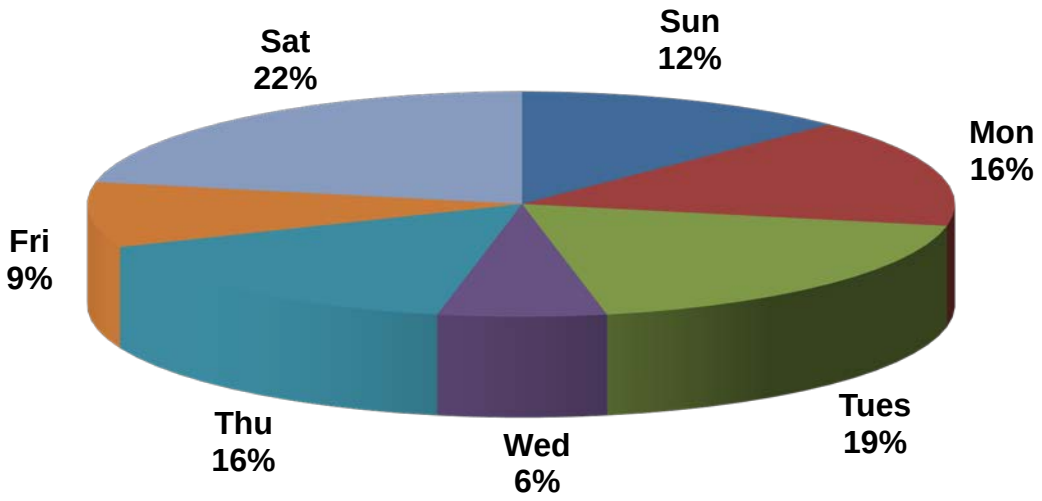
Homicide Totals by Month

- Some cases involve situations in which the victim was found hours, possibly days, after being killed. Since it is difficult to determine the exact date and time of death, the date and time of discovery was used for month/day/time analysis. Other cases involve victims that die months or years after their initial injuries – these cases may use the date and time of death for analysis purposes.
- The most active months for murder in 2018 were March and September with six murders each and June with five murders.
- The least active months were February with no murders and January, April, and October with one murder each.



Homicides by Day of the Week

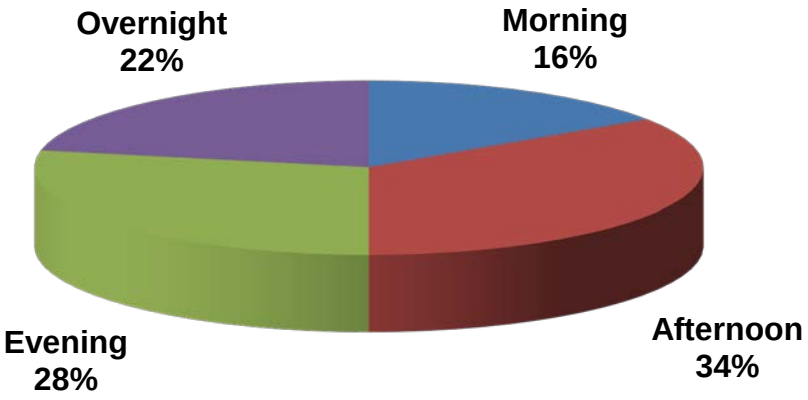
- Seven (22%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered on a Saturday.
- Six homicides occurred or were discovered on a Tuesday (19%), five each on a Monday (16%) and on a Thursday (16%).



Homicides by Time of the Day

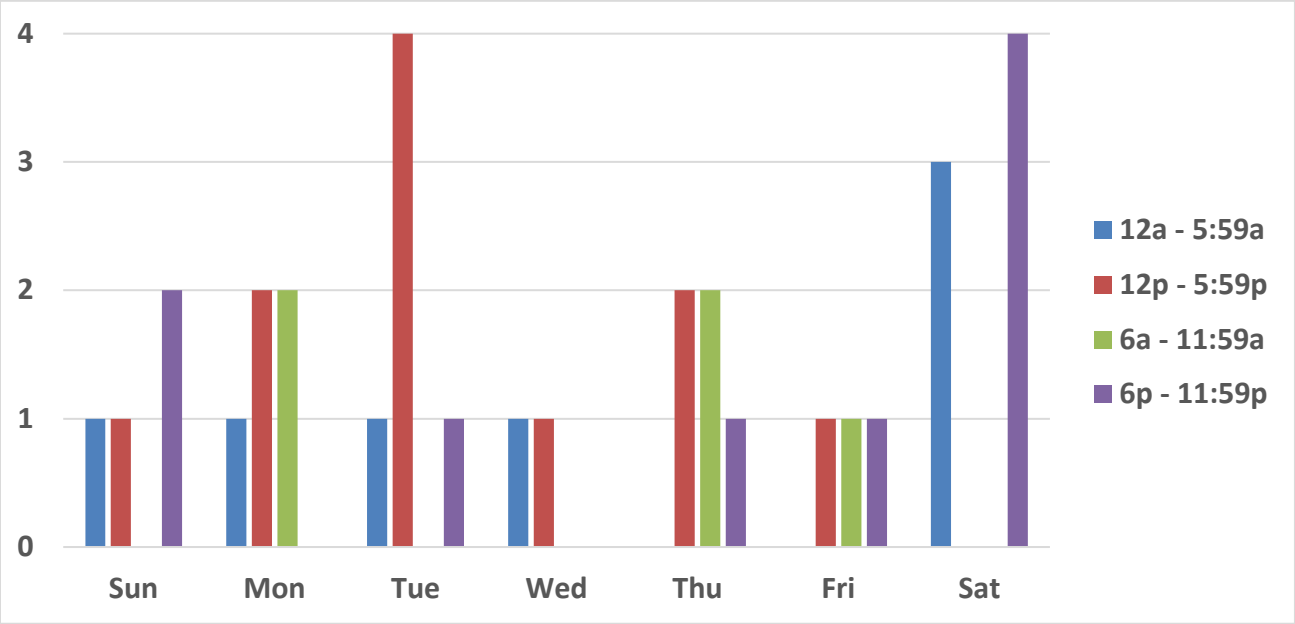
- Eleven (34%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered during afternoon hours.
- Nine (28%) of the homicides occurred or were discovered during evening hours.

Time is broken into four intervals: Morning is 6:00 a.m. to 11:59 a.m.
Afternoon is 12 noon to 5:59 p.m.
Evening is 6:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.
Overnight is 12 midnight to 5:59 a.m.



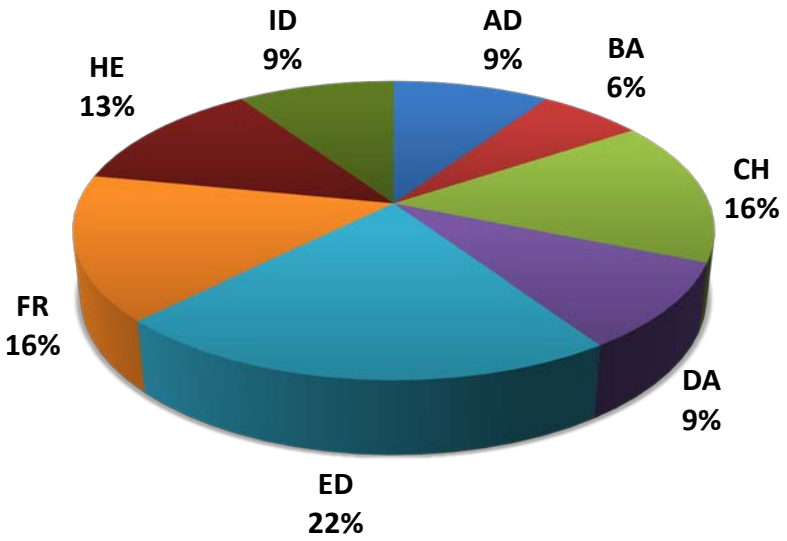
Homicides by Day of Week & Time of the Day

- The most active days and time periods for murders for 2018 were Tuesdays from 12:00pm to 5:59pm and Saturdays from 6:00pm to 11:59pm with four each.
- The next most active day and time period were Saturdays from 12:00am to 6:59am with three.

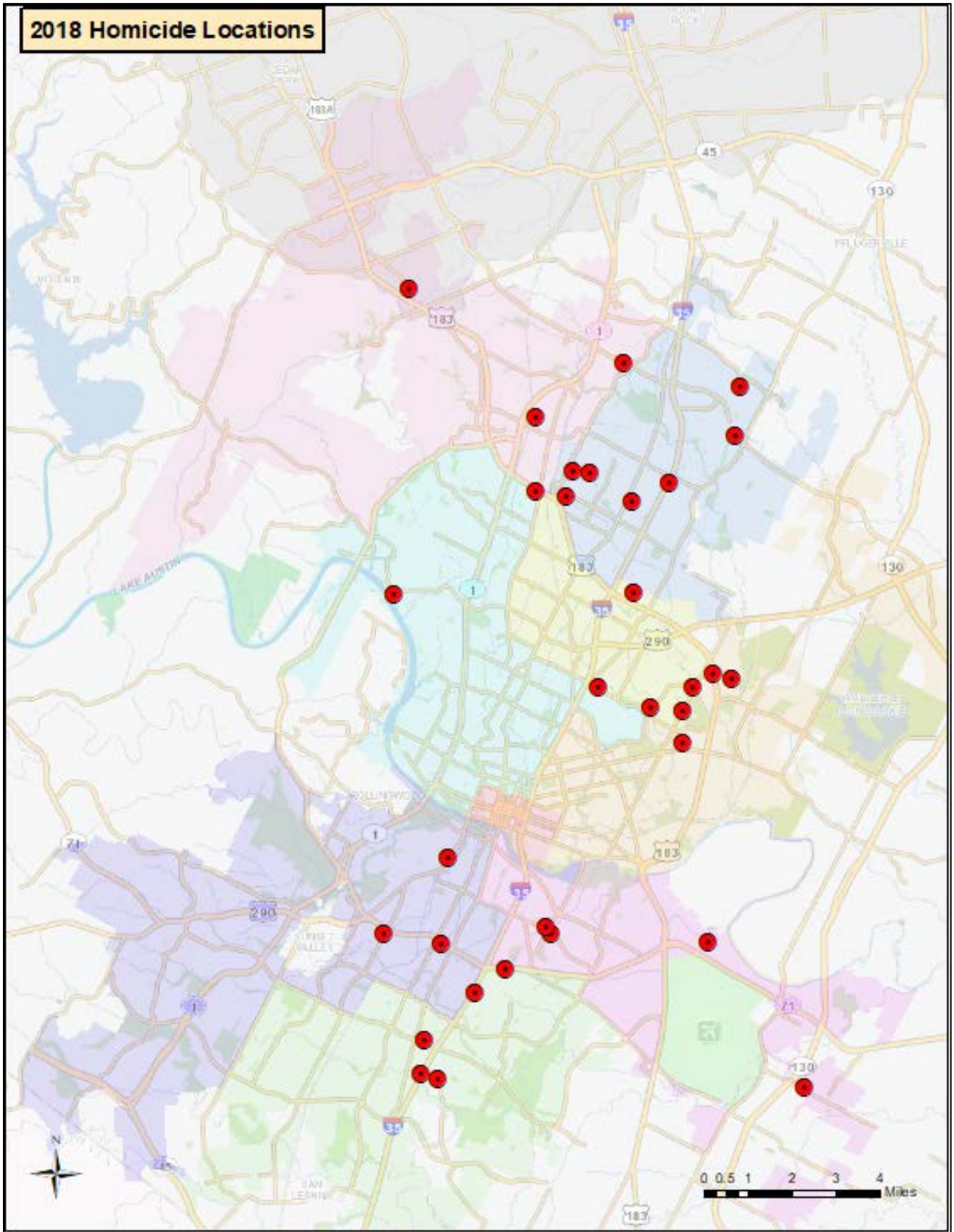


Homicides by Area Command

- Seven (22%) homicides occurred in Edward sector, five (16%) occurred in Charlie sector, and five (16%) also occurred in Frank sector. These three sectors account for a total of 54% of 2018's homicides.
- The rest of the sectors had one to four homicides except George sector which had no homicides during 2018.



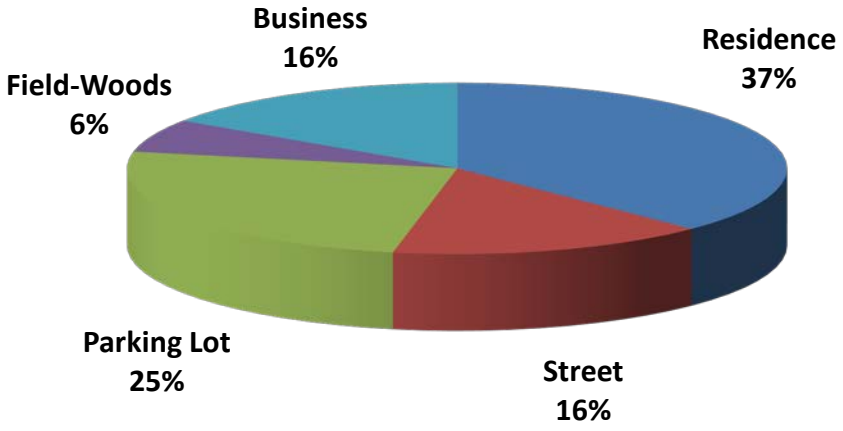
Homicides by Location – Point Map



This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference.
No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.

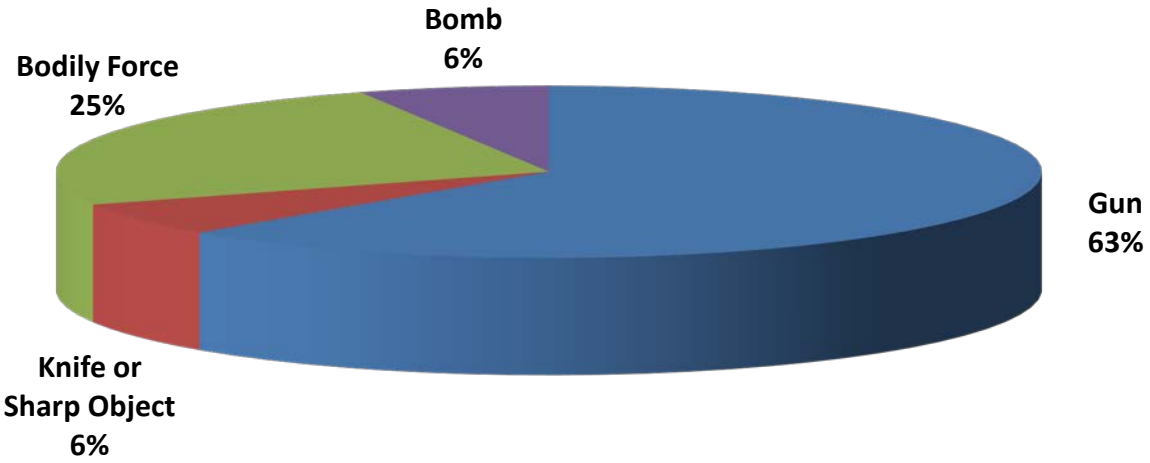
Homicides by Type of Premise

- Twelve (37%) of the homicides occurred at a single-family residence, apartment, or extended stay motel. Of those, eight occurred inside the residence, apartment, or motel room.
- Eight homicides (25%) occurred in a parking lot (six of those in apartment complex parking lots) and five (16%) occurred in or outside a business.
- Five (16%) homicides occurred on the street and two (6%) occurred in a field-woods.

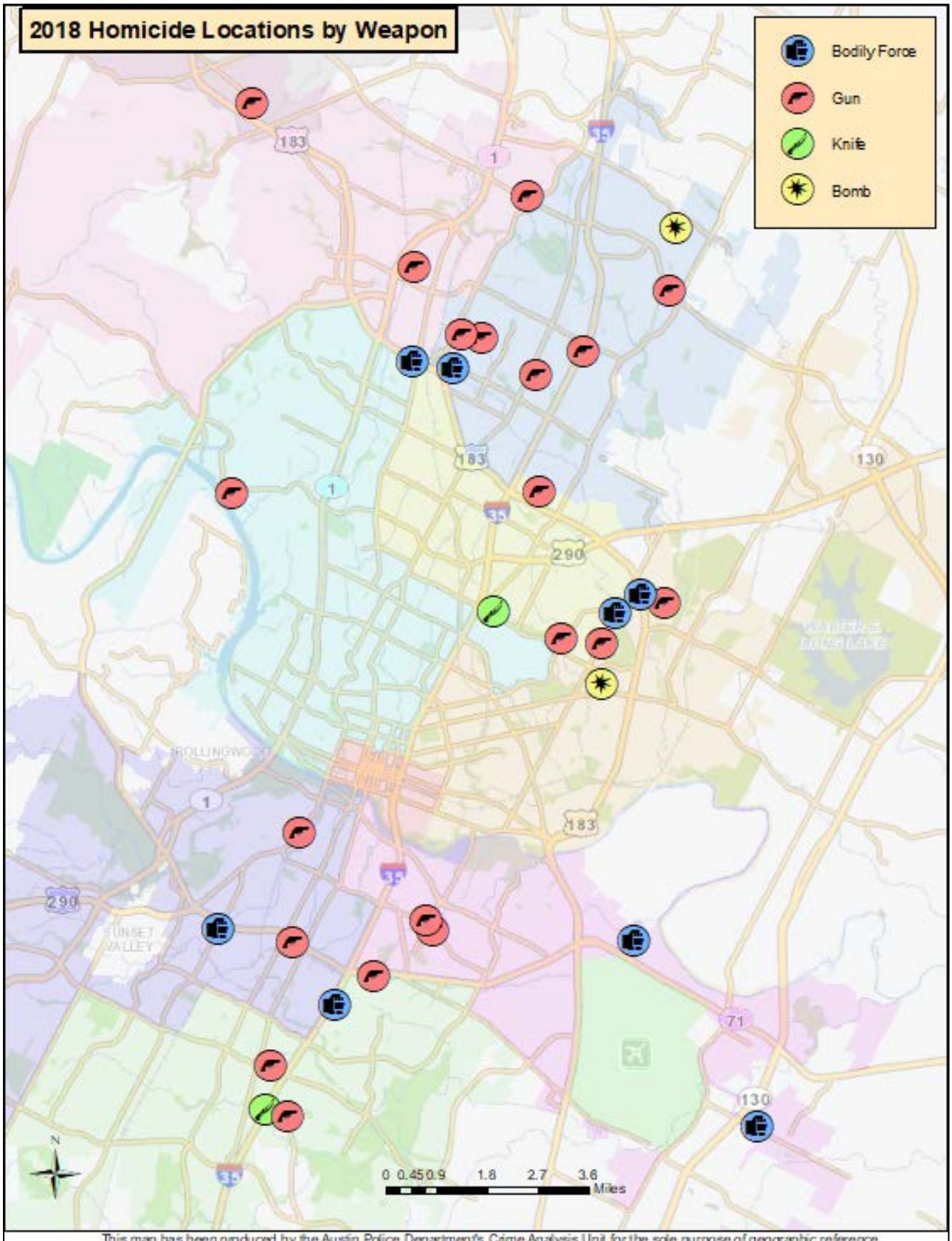


Types of Weapons Used

- A gun was used in 20 of the 32 murders, accounting for 63% of the weapon types used in the 2018 murders. A gun accounted for 64% of the weapon types used in 2017 murders.
- Bodily force was used in eight cases (25%), a knife or a sharp object was used in two cases (6%), and a bomb was used in two cases (6%).



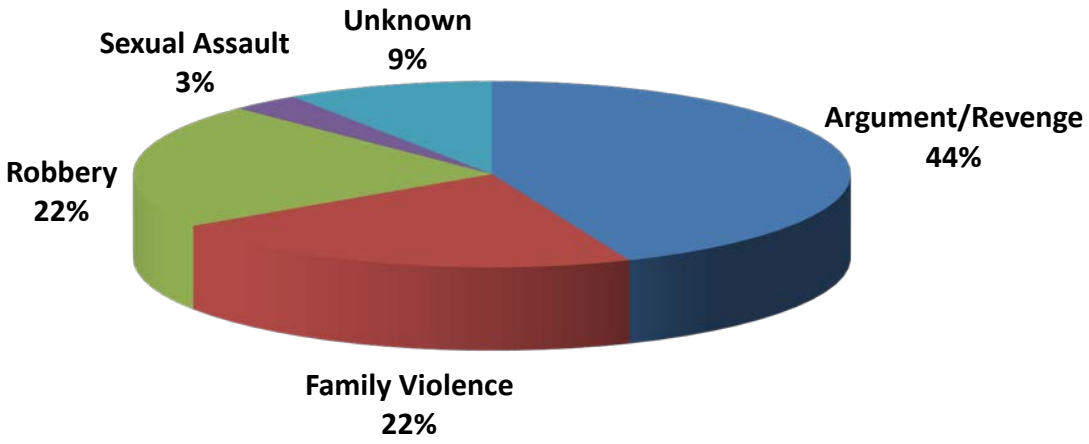
Homicides by Weapon – Point Map



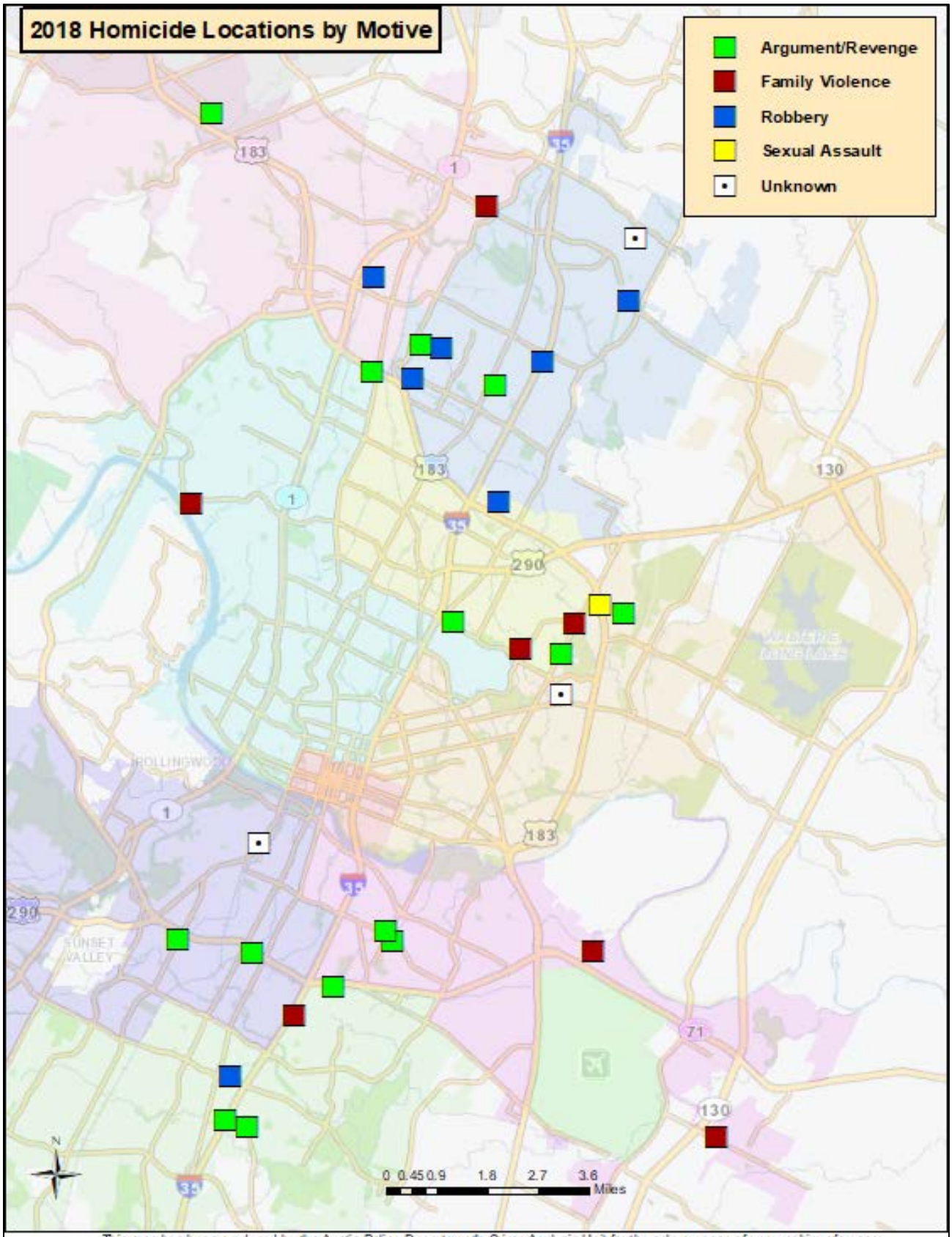
This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference.
No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.

Homicide Motives

- Fourteen (44%) of the 2018 murders involved issues stemming from an argument or were revenge for an earlier issue.
- Seven (22%) of the cases met the legal requirements for family violence (motivated by issues stemming from a close family, intimate partner, or ex-partner relationship).
  - Five of the seven family violence murders were committed by intimate partners. One of these cases was a murder-suicide which involved an elderly couple with worsening health issues.
  - Two of the seven family violence murders were committed by family members.
- Robbery was the motive in seven homicides (22%). All seven were drug related robberies.
- The motive was undetermined in three (9%) of the 32 murders that occurred in 2018. These murders include the two bombings and a shooting spree where one victim was killed and several others injured.



Homicides by Motive – Point Map

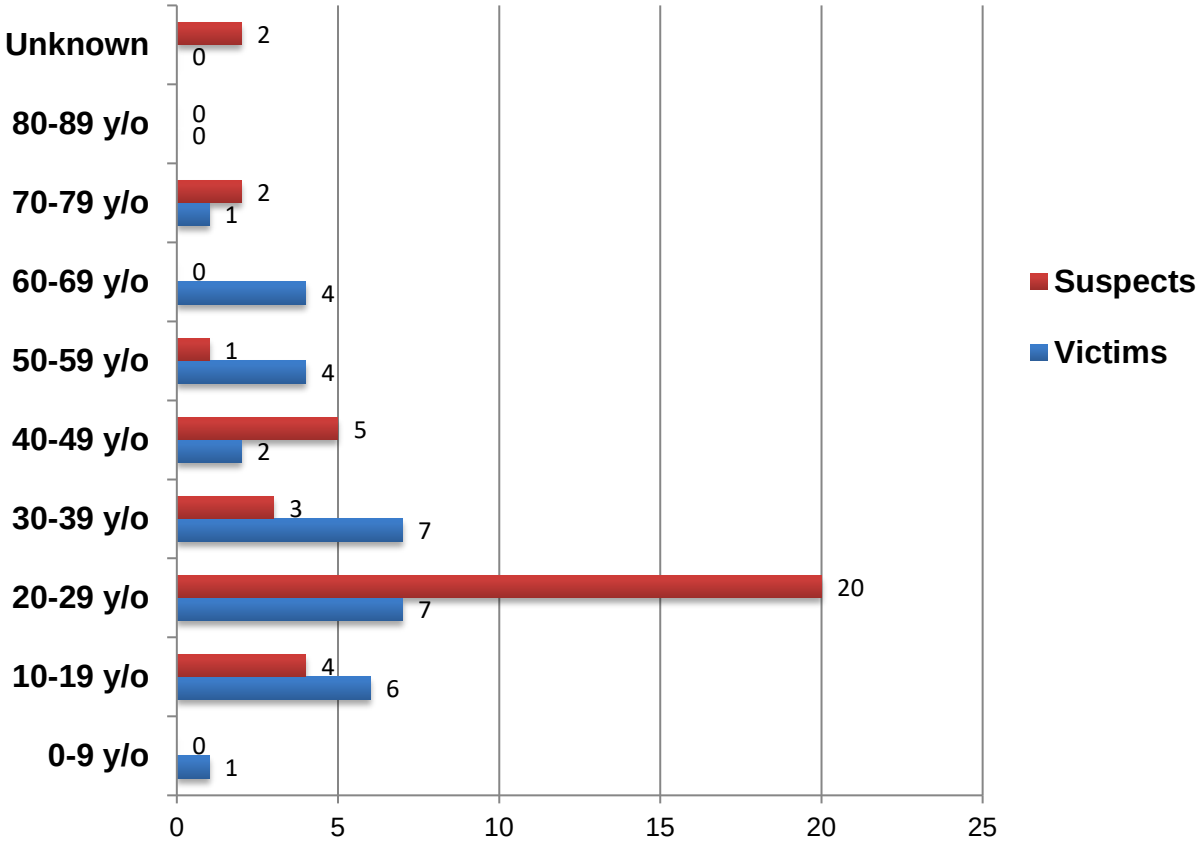


Victims & Suspects

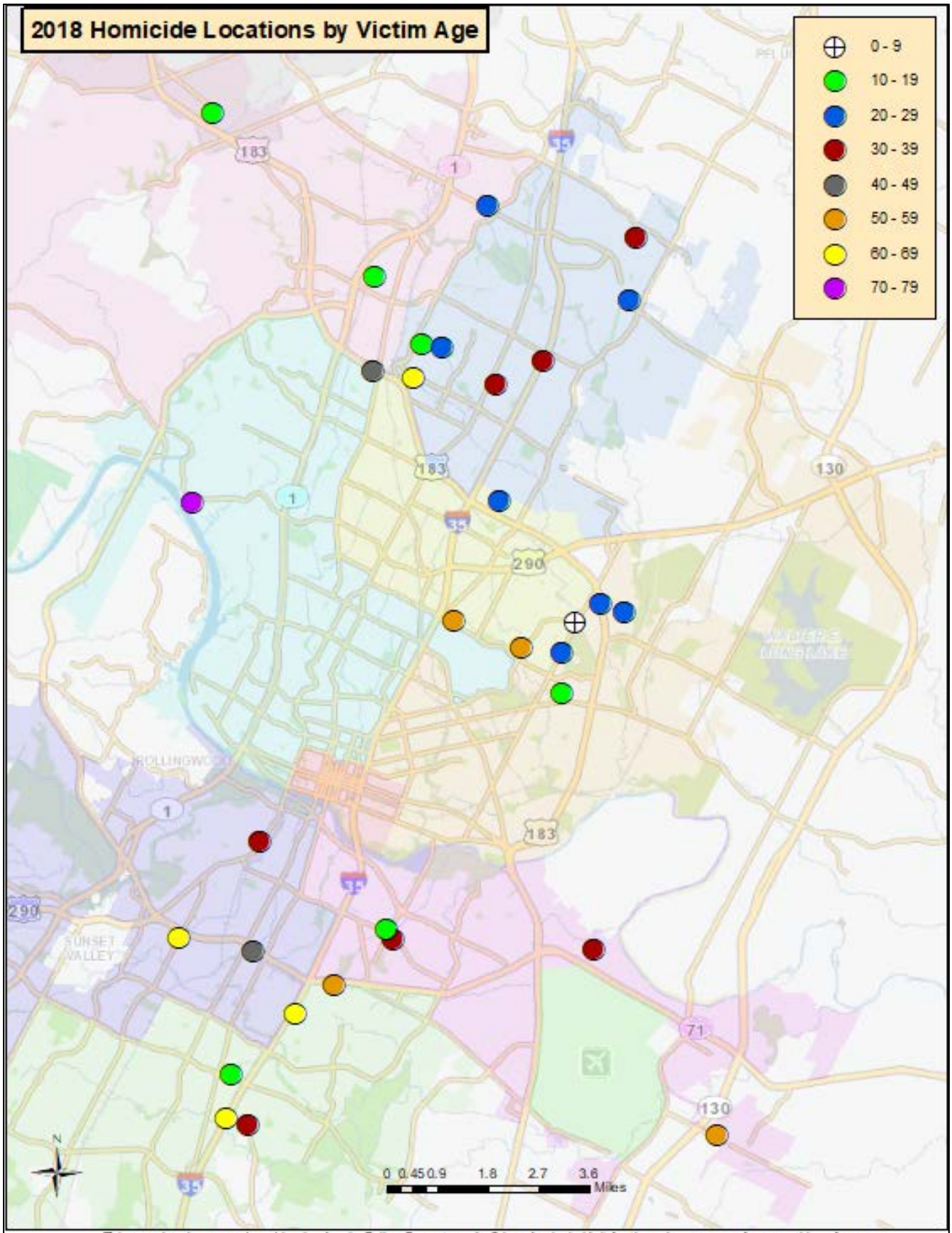
- A total of 32 victims and 37 suspects were documented for the 2018 murders.

Homicides by Age

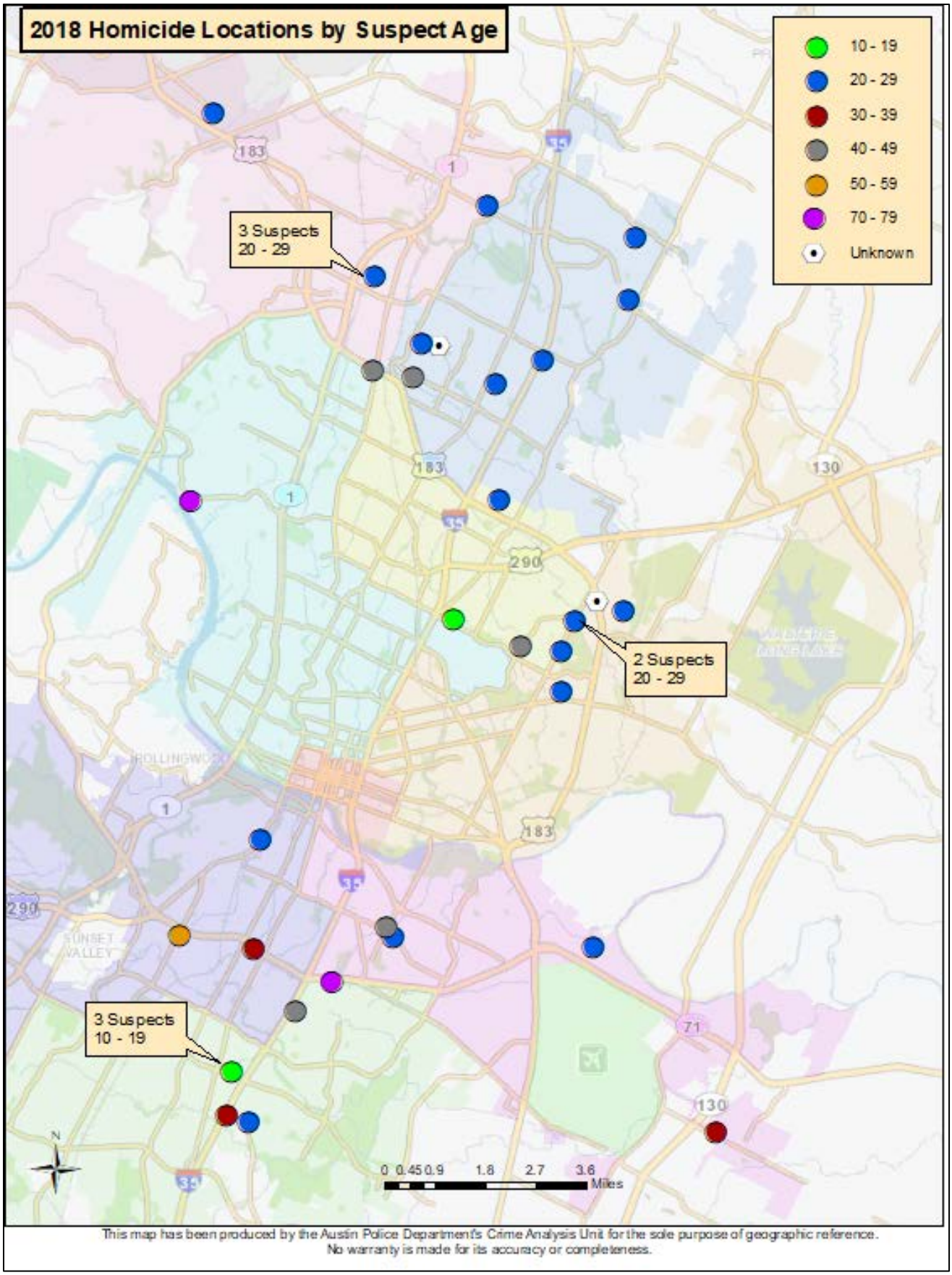
- The youngest victim was two years old and the oldest was 76 years old, with 14 of the victims (44%) falling between the ages of 20 and 39.
- In the cases in which the suspect's age was known, the youngest suspect was 17 years old and the oldest was 76 years old, with 23 of the suspects (62%) falling between the ages of 20 and 39.



Homicides by Victim Age – Point Map

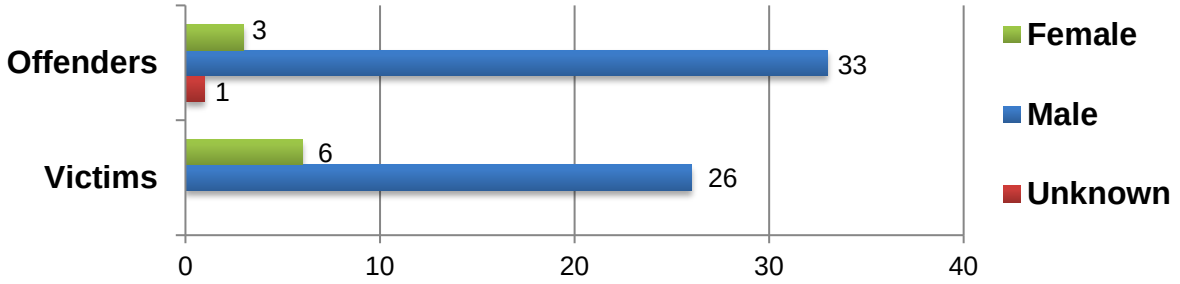


Homicides by Suspect Age – Point Map



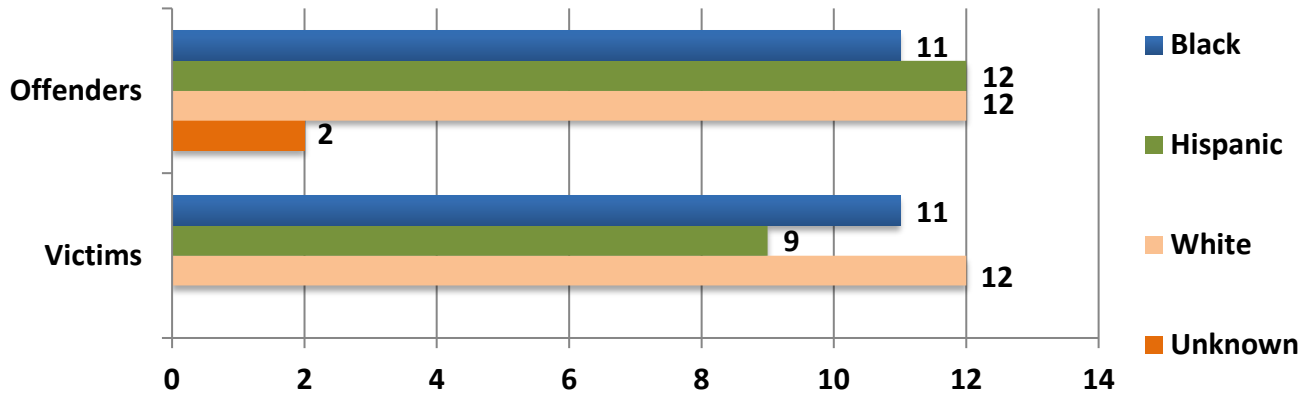
Homicides by Gender

- Twenty-six males (81%) were victims in 2018.
- The suspect's gender was known for 36 of the 37 total suspects. Thirty-three of the known suspects were males (89%).

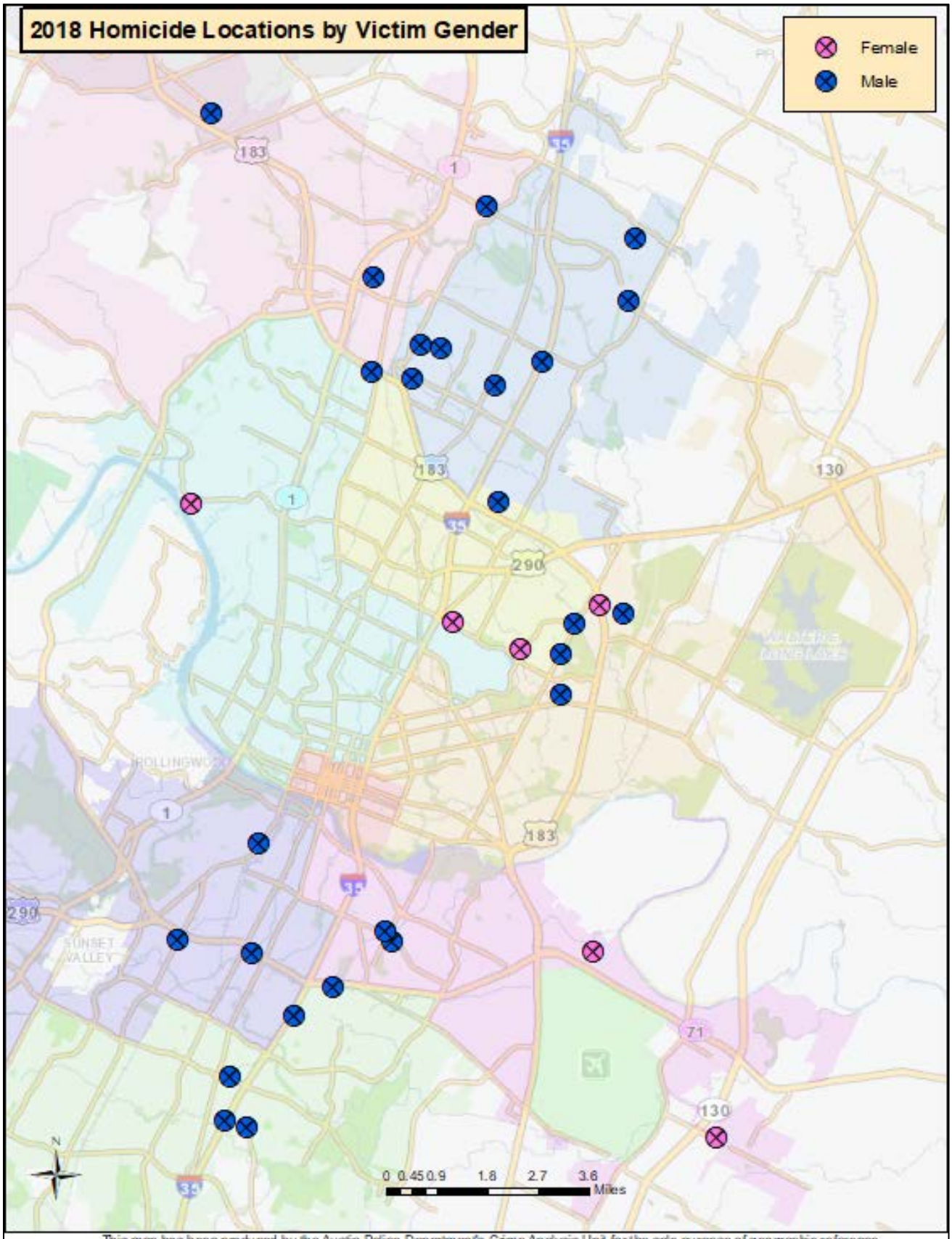


Homicides by Race/Ethnicity

- Twelve (38%) of the homicide victims in 2018 were White, eleven (34%) were Black, and nine (28%) were Hispanic.
  - One of the victims was a Mexican National, one was from El Salvador, and one was from Germany.
- The race/ethnicity was known for 35 of the 37 suspects - 12 (32%) of the homicide suspects were White, 12 (32%) were Hispanic, and 11 (30%) were Black.
  - Three suspects were Mexican Nationals and three were Honduran.
- Victim and suspect demographics indicate that for 2018 Blacks are over-represented as victims (34%) and as suspects (30%) of homicides. According to 2010 census data, 8.1% of the overall Austin population is Black.
- Victim and suspect demographics indicate that for 2018 Hispanics are under-represented as victims (28%) and as suspects (32%) of homicides. According to 2010 census data, Hispanics account for 35.1% of the overall Austin population.
- Victim and suspect demographics indicate that for 2018 Whites are under-represented as victims (38%) and as suspects (32%) of homicides. According to 2010 census data, Whites account for 68.3% of the overall Austin population.

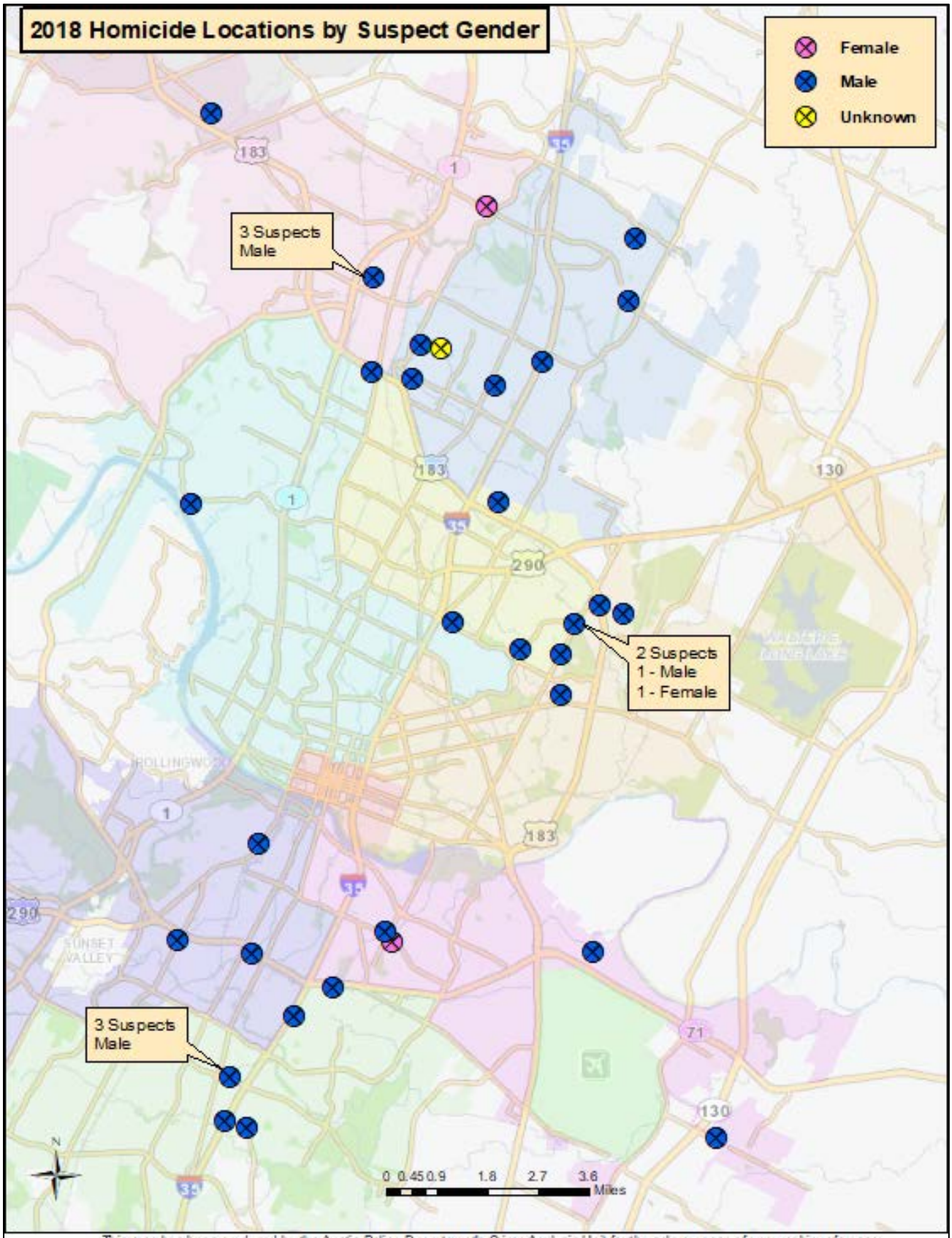


Homicides by Victim Gender – Point Map

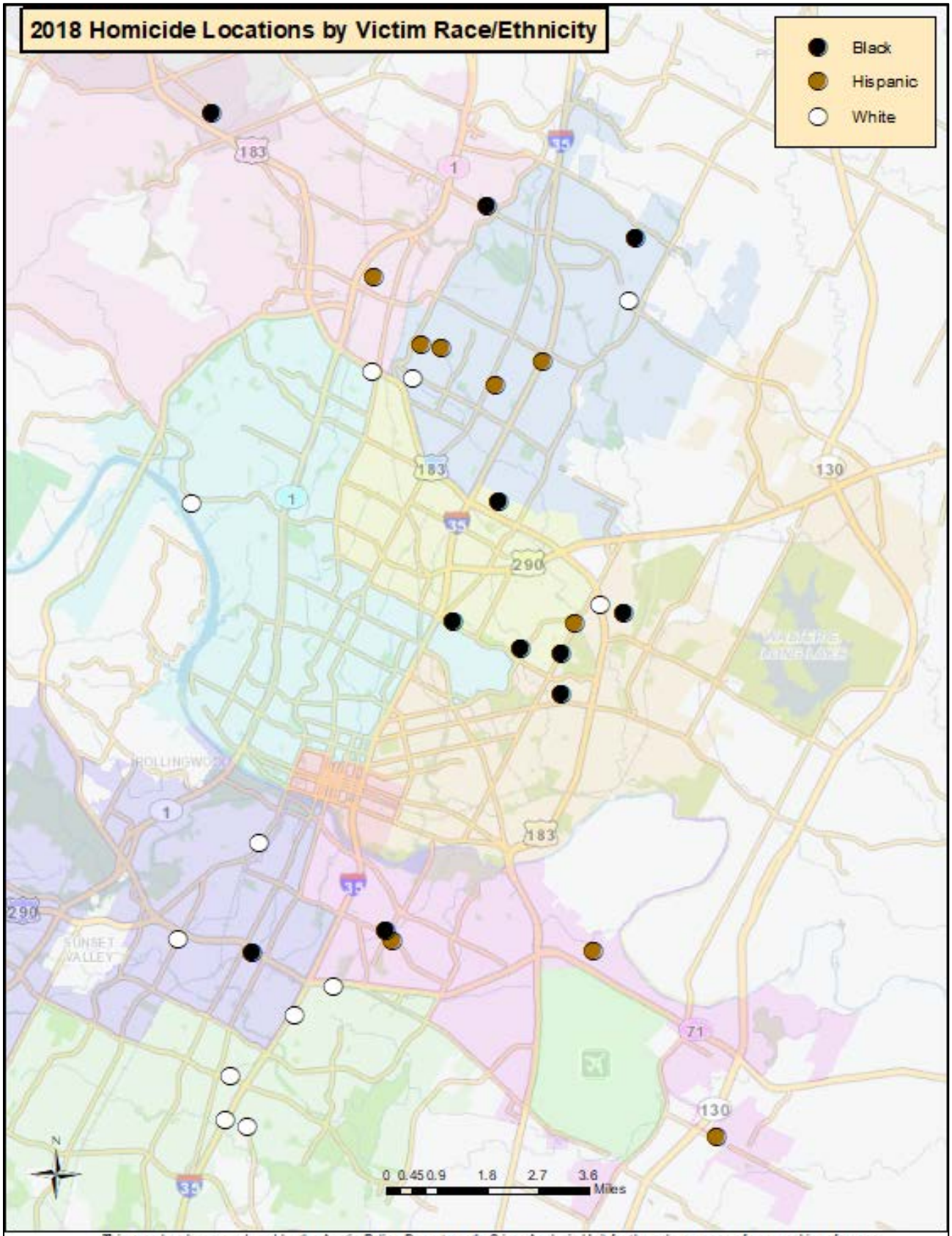


This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference.
No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.

Homicides by Suspect Gender – Point Map

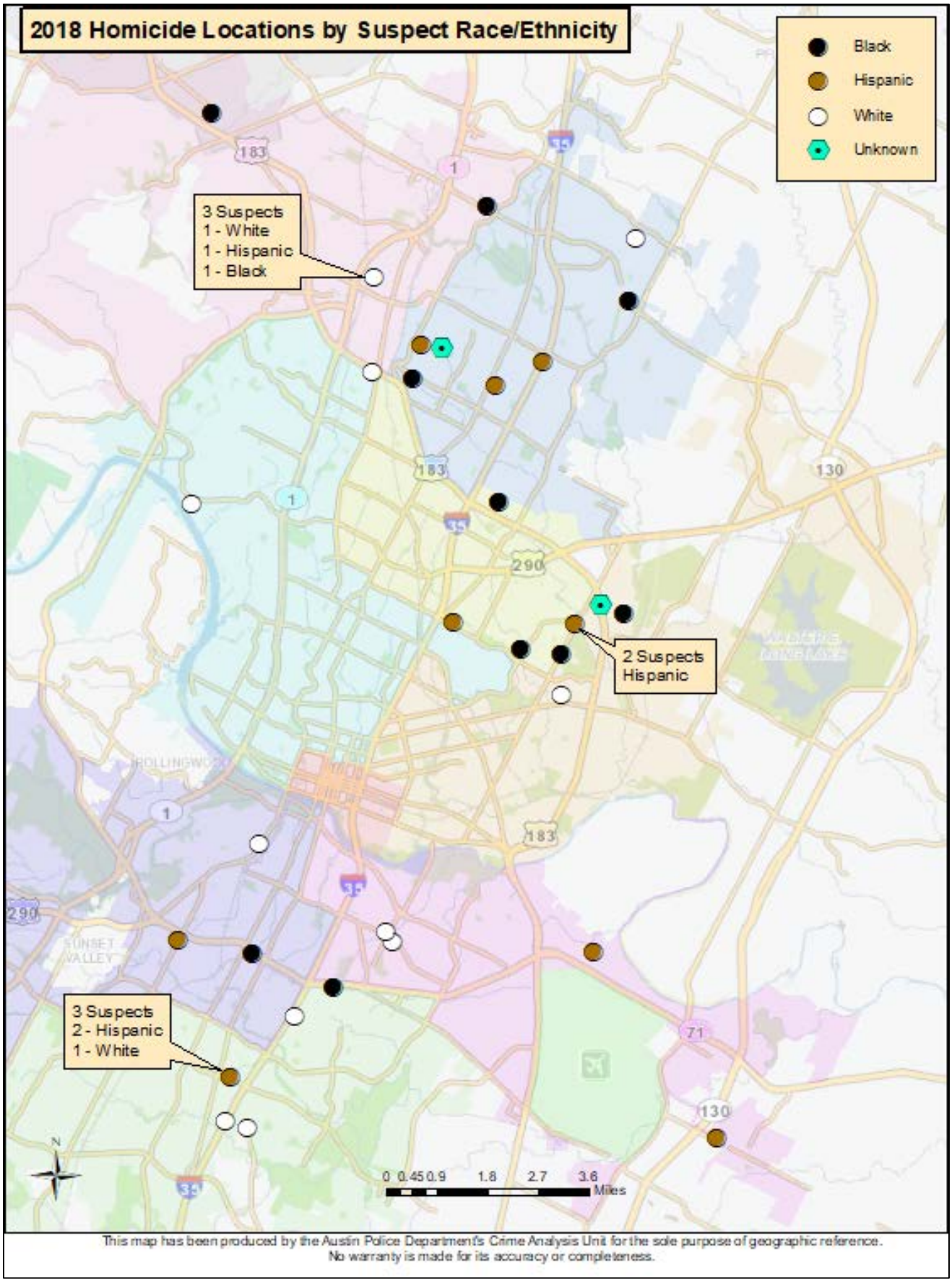


Homicides by Victim Race/Ethnicity – Point Map



This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference.
No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.

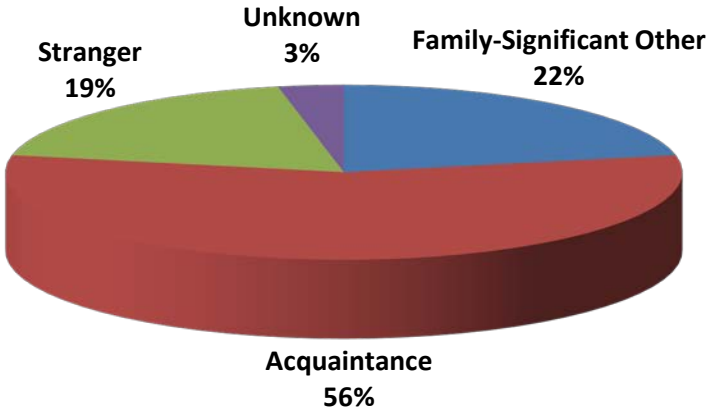
Homicides by Suspect Race/Ethnicity – Point Map



This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference.
No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.

Relationship between Victim and Suspect

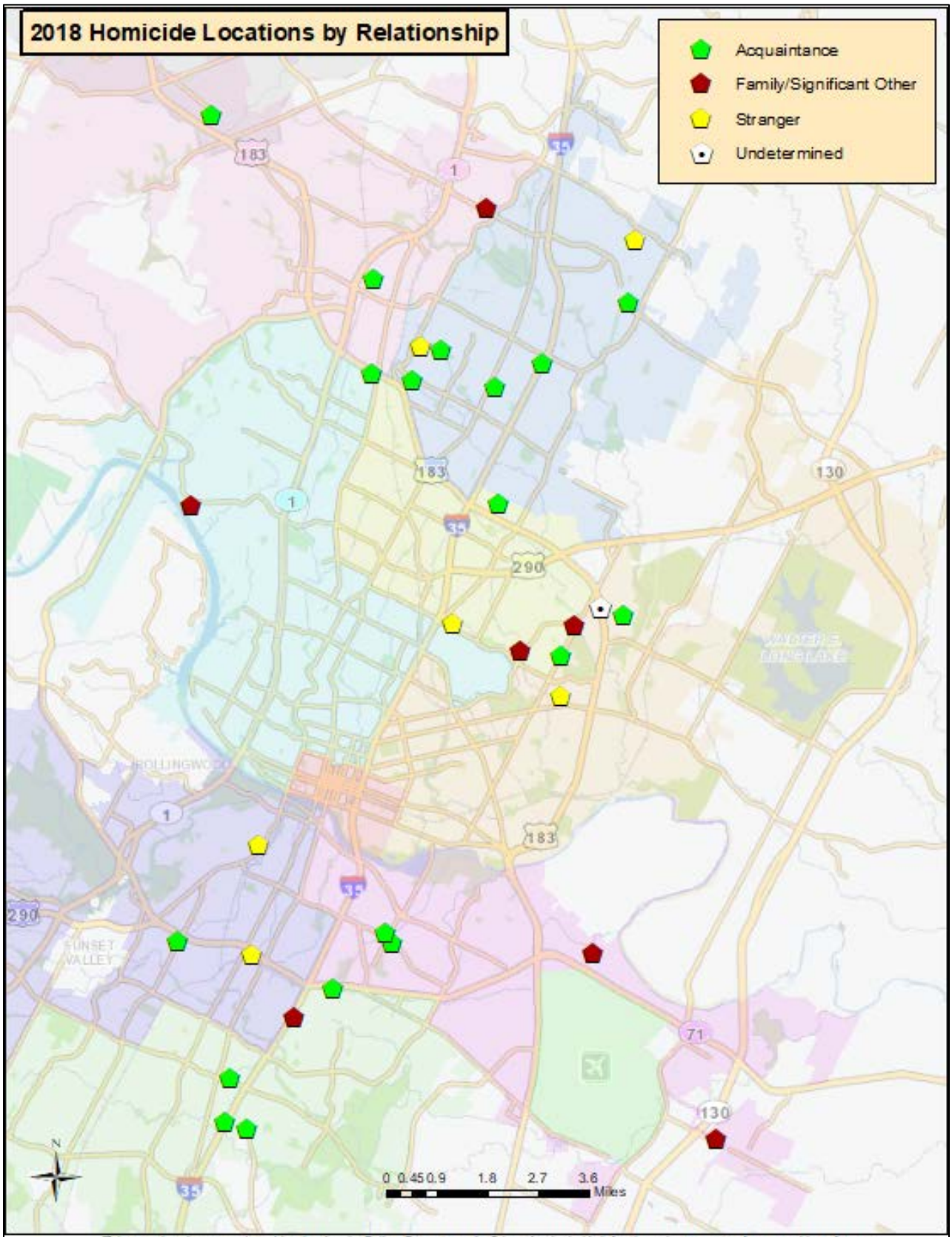
- The relationship between victim and suspect(s) was established in 31 of the 32 murders in 2018, while the relationship was undetermined in one (3%) murder.
- At least one suspect was an acquaintance in 18 murders (56%).
- The suspect was a family member or significant other in seven cases (22%).
- Six of these 32 murders (19%) were considered stranger-on-stranger murders.
  - These six murders include four cases in which the victim was chosen at random (including the two bombings, a shooting spree, and a drive-by shooting).
  - In the other two cases, the victim and suspect were brought together by a location (such as a bar or parking lot) or an activity (such as buying drugs, prostitution, or gambling) – one case involved a bar and the other case involved prostitution.
  - As of August 15, 2019, five of the stranger-on-stranger murders have been solved – three have been cleared by arrest and two were cleared exceptionally (death of offender). A drive-by shooting case is still unsolved.
  - The two bombing cases were committed by the same suspect who killed himself but no other stranger cases appear to be related.



Miscellaneous Victim and Suspect Information

- At least five victims were transients. At least four of the known suspects were transients.
- At least four of the known suspects were possibly gang members.
- At least seven of the murder victims were believed to be drug dealers and at least six suspects are believed to be drug dealers.
- Two of the homicides were murder/suicides.
- Three of the homicides involved multiple suspects.
- Two murders were committed using bombs by the same suspect who killed himself.
- Two murders resulting from robberies during drug deals were committed by the same person.

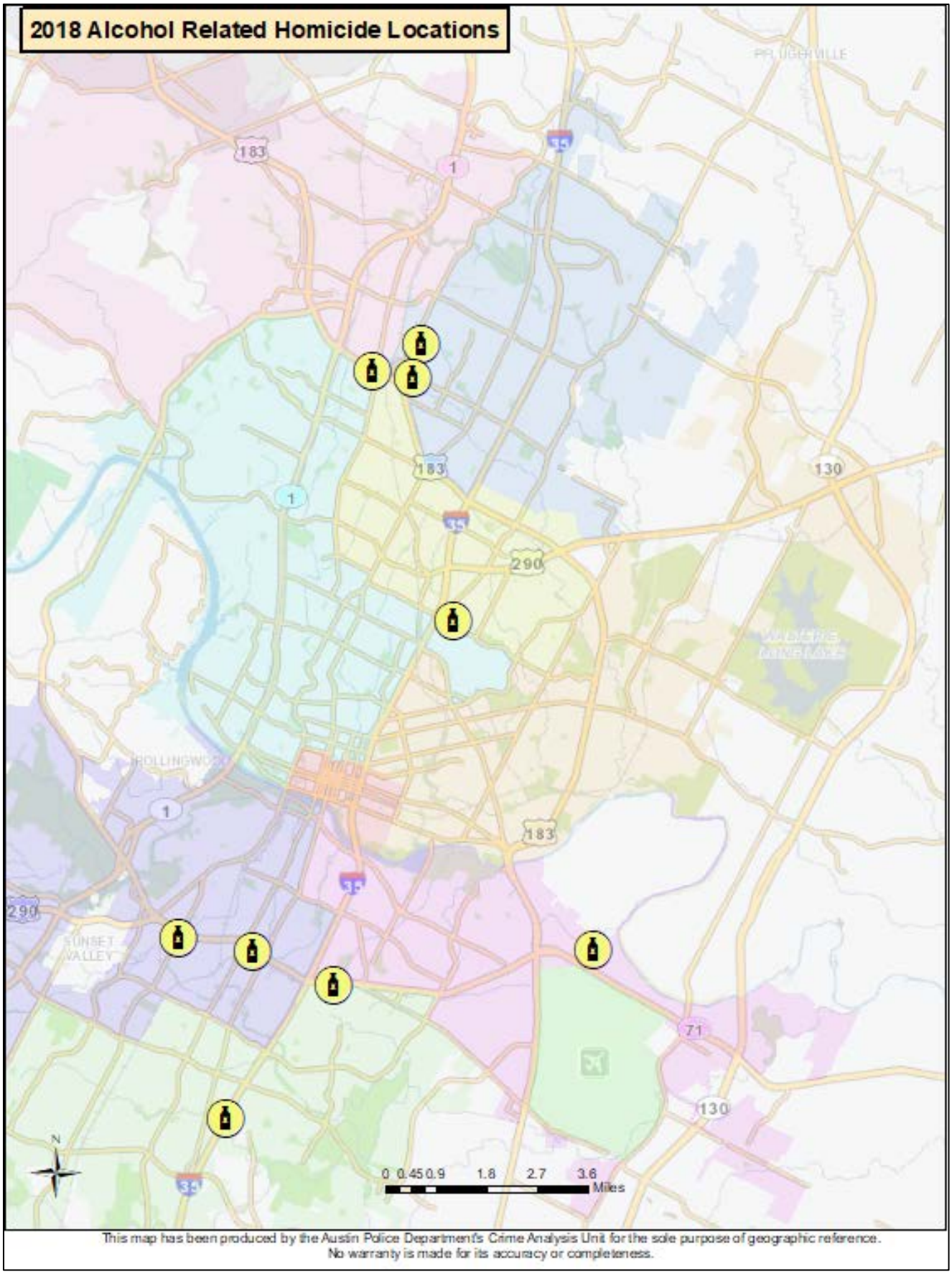
Homicides by Relationship – Point Map



Family Violence, Contributing Factors, Offense Classification

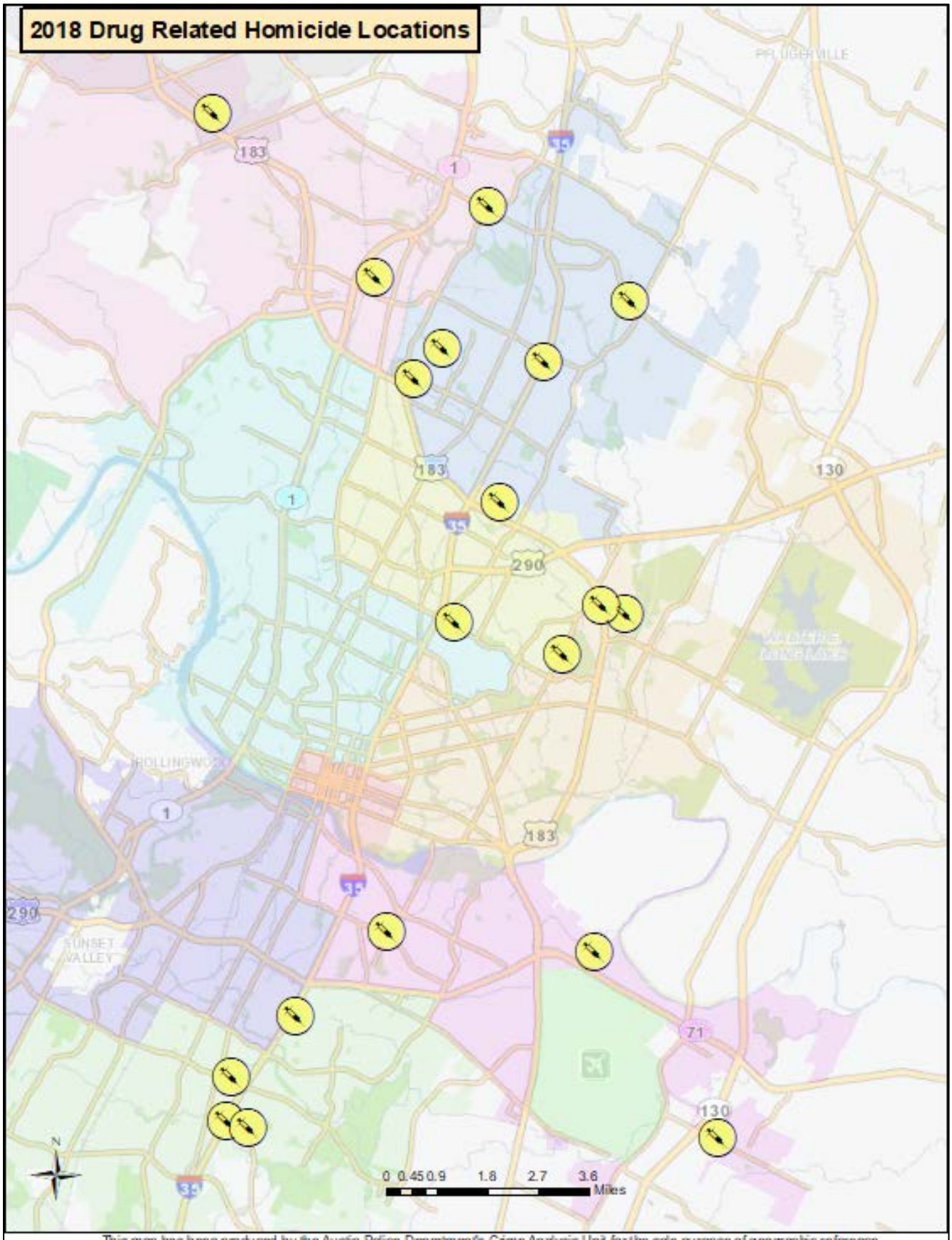
- Seven (22%) of the murders met the Texas Penal Code & Family Code definition for family violence.
  - Five were committed by an intimate partner or ex-partner. One was a murder-suicide.
  - Two were committed by a family member.
- Alcohol was believed to be a contributing factor in nine (28%) of the homicides.
- Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 19 (59%) of the homicides. Drugs were believed to be a contributing factor in 44% of the 2017 homicides.
- Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in seven (22%) of the 2018 homicides. Robbery was believed to be a contributing factor in five of the twenty-five 2017 homicides (20%).
- Prostitution was believed to be a contributing factor in two (6%) of the homicides.
- Sexual Assault was believed to be a contributing factor in one (3%) of the homicides.
- Offense classifications are determined using the facts of the murder investigation in conjuction with mitigating and/or aggravating factors or cirumstances.
  - Three (9%) of the homicides were designated as Capital Murder as of August 15, 2019. A homicide can be designated as Capital Murder if it includes the commission of an additional felony at the time of the murder (two of these three cases involved robbery and one involved sexual assault), the murder of a law enforcement officer, the murder of more than one victim, or the murder of an individual under six years of age.
  - Three (9%) of the homicides were designated as Manslaughter as of August 15, 2019. A person commits Manslaughter if he/she recklessly causes the death of an individual. One of these three cases involved a gun that was handled recklessly. The other two cases involved a victim being punched so hard he fell and hit his head. All three of these cases had drugs and/or alcohol as a contributing factor.

Alcohol Related Homicides – Point Map



This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference.
No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.

Drug Related Homicides – Point Map

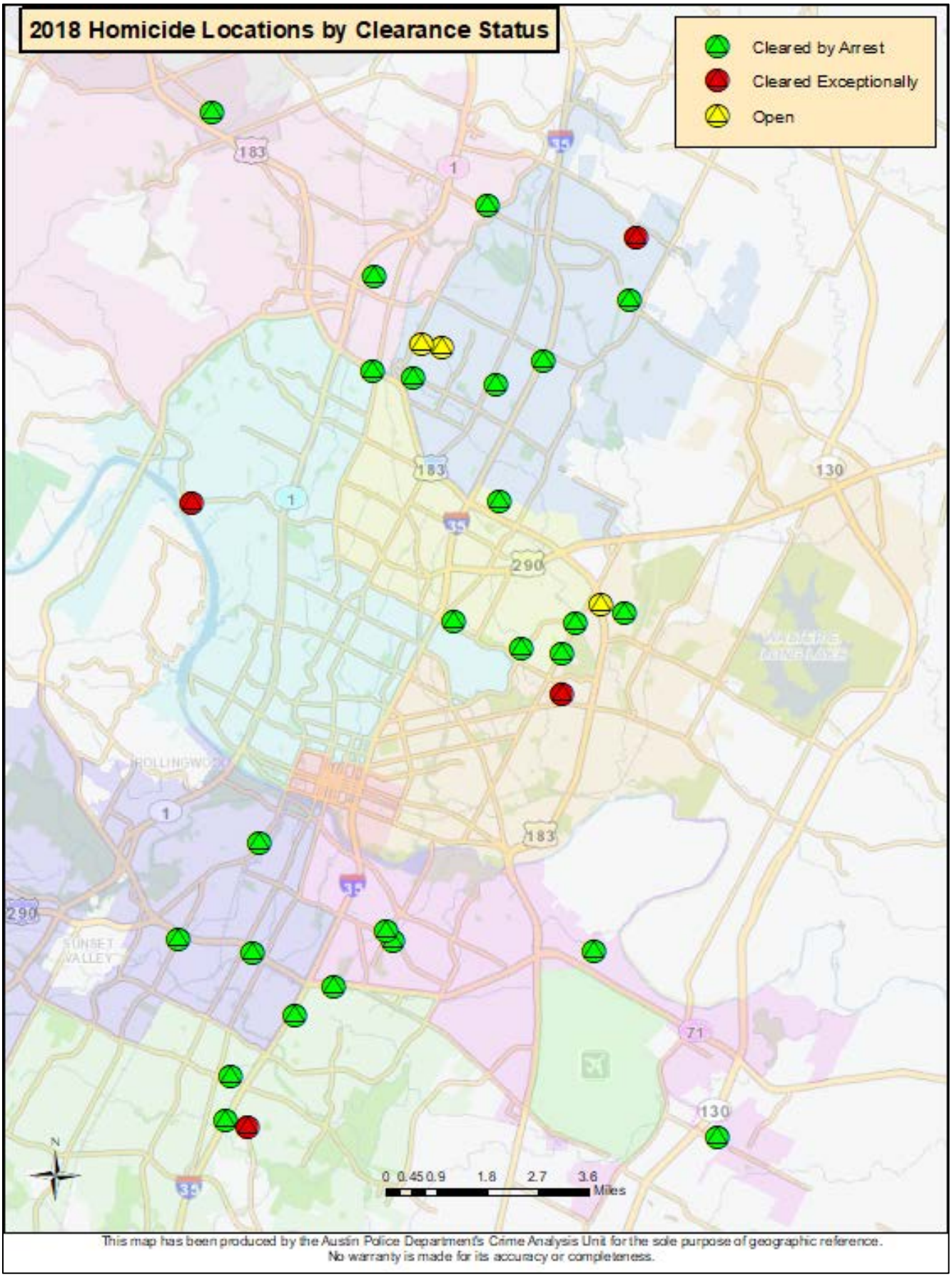


This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference.
No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.

Homicide Clearance Rate

- As of August 15, 2019, 29 of the 32 murders in 2018 have been cleared (by arrest or exceptionally), for a 91% clearance rate.
  - Twenty-six of the 32 cases were cleared during 2018. Three were cleared in January of 2019.
  - The three murders in 2018 that are considered "not cleared" have not been solved to date. The suspect(s) have not been identified.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime in the United States 2017:*
  - The clearance rate for cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 was 57.1%. **This includes all homicide cases that were cleared during 2017 regardless of when the murder occurred.**
  - The rate for all of the United States was 61.6%.
- According to the Texas Department of Public Safety's *2017 Crime in Texas Report*, the clearance rate for all of Texas was 68.7%.
- As of August 15, 2019 (in addition to the twenty-six 2018 murders that were cleared during 2018), three cases from previous years were also cleared - for a total of 29 murder cases cleared during 2018. Based on 32 murders occurring in 2018 and 29 murder cases being cleared during 2018 – 91% is the total UCR clearance rate for homicide cases for Austin in 2018.
  - One 2017 murder case was cleared by arrest in February of 2018.
  - One 2016 murder case was cleared exceptionally in June of 2018.
  - One 2015 murder case was cleared by arrest in March of 2018.

Homicides by Clearance Status – Point Map



This map has been produced by the Austin Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit for the sole purpose of geographic reference.
No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.