


HOMICIDE IN CALIFORNIA 1999



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-  **Contents**
- **Homicide Crimes**
- **Homicide Arrests**
- **Dispositions**
- **Death Penalty Sentences**
- **Peace Officers Killed**
- **Justifiable Homicides**
- **Appendix**

- **CJSC HOME PAGE**
- **CJSC PUBLICATIONS**
- **AG'S HOME PAGE**

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Man is man because he is free to operate within the framework of his destiny. He is free to deliberate, to make decisions, and to choose between alternatives. He is distinguished from animals by his freedom to do good and to walk the high road of beauty or tread the low road of ugly degeneracy.

Martin Luther King, Jr.
(1929-1968)

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The role of the Criminal Justice Statistics Center is to:

- Collect, analyze, and report statistical data which provide valid measures of crime and the criminal justice process;
- Examine these data on an ongoing basis to better describe crime and the criminal justice system;
- Promote the responsible presentation and use of crime statistics.

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introduction

Homicide in California, 1999 contains information about the crime of homicide and its victims, demographic data on persons arrested for homicide, and information about the response of the criminal justice system. Information about the death penalty, the number of peace officers killed in the line of duty, and justifiable homicide is also included.

Most data displayed in this publication come from three data bases maintained by the California Department of Justice's Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC). The Homicide File captures willful and justifiable homicide crime data; the Monthly Arrest and Citation Register captures the race/ethnic group, age, and gender of persons arrested for homicide; and the Offender-Based Transaction Statistics system captures information about types of dispositions and sentences. Because of differences in the type of data collected, and the methods used to collect these data, the reader is cautioned against comparing data from these three collection systems.

As in last year's edition, CJSC publications available in either printed or electronic format (via the Internet) are listed on the inside of the back cover. Customized statistical reports or additional statistical information may be requested by contacting CJSC at the numbers provided.

highlights

HOMICIDE CRIMES (see pages 2-23)

- From 1998 to 1999, homicide crimes decreased 9.2 percent in rate per 100,000 population (6.5 to 5.9). From 1990 to 1999, the homicide crime rate decreased 51.2 percent (12.1 to 5.9).
- Since 1990, homicide rates have decreased for all gender, race/ethnic and age groups shown. (See pages 4-5.) Blacks experienced the highest rate of decline (down 56.3 percent) but continue to maintain substantially higher homicide victimization rates compared to whites and Hispanics.
- The homicide rate for victims aged 30-39 decreased 54.5 percent from 1990 to 1999 (14.3 to 6.5).
- In 1999, most white victims fell into the aged "40 and over" category (47.9 percent). Most Hispanic and black victims fell into the aged "18-29" category (54.5 and 45.5 percent, respectively).
- From 1990 to 1999, the majority of homicide victims knew their assailant.
- Proportionately, females were over 13 times more likely to be killed by their spouses than were males.
- Generally, homicides occurred most often during the summertime.
- In 1999, males were most likely to be killed on streets or sidewalks and least likely to be killed in their residences; the inverse was true for females. (See page 16.)
- Since 1990, more homicide victims have been killed by firearms than by all other types of weapons combined.
- In 1999, 38.7 percent of homicide victims aged 5-29 were killed as a result of gang-related activities.
- Out of every 100 homicides, 59.8 were cleared by an arrest in 1999.

HOMICIDE ARRESTS (see pages 26-29)

- From 1998 to 1999, homicide arrests decreased 17.9 percent in rate per 100,000 population at risk (8.4 to 6.9). From 1990 to 1999, the homicide arrest rate decreased 58.7 percent (16.7 to 6.9).
- From 1990 to 1999, the majority of homicide arrestees and victims were male.
- In 1999, the largest proportion of homicide arrestees and victims were Hispanic (47.7 and 45.5 percent, respectively). The majority of homicide arrestees were aged 18-29 (58.6 percent) and the largest proportion of homicide victims were aged 18-29 (42.3 percent).

DISPOSITIONS OF ADULTS ARRESTED FOR HOMICIDE (see pages 32-37)

- Over 70 percent of adults arrested for homicide, for which dispositions were received, were convicted of homicide or some other offense.

DEATH PENALTY SENTENCES (see pages 40-41)

- By the end of 1999, 556 persons were under sentence of death in California. Of these, 42 were sentenced in 1999.

PEACE OFFICERS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY (see pages 44-45)

- Since 1990, 63 peace officers have been feloniously killed in the line of duty. Four were killed in 1999.
- Since 1990, the homicide rate for peace officers killed in the line of duty decreased 30.1 percent per 100,000 respective population (8.3 to 5.8).

HOMICIDE CRIMES 