



Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

Murder in Families

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A survey of murder cases disposed in 1988 in the courts of large urban counties indicated that 16% of murder victims were members of the defendant's family. The remainder were murdered by friends or acquaintances (64%) or by strangers (20%). These findings are drawn from a representative sample survey of State and county prosecutors' records. The survey covered disposed charges against nearly 10,000 murder defendants, whose murder cases accounted for over 8,000 victims.

Other findings include the following:

- Among murder victims 6.5% were killed by their spouses, 3.5% by their parents, 1.9% by their own children, 1.5% by their siblings, and 2.6% by some other family member.
- A third of family murders involved a female as the killer. In sibling murders, females were 15% of killers, and in murders of parents, 18%. But in spouse murders, women represented 41% of killers. In murders of their offspring, women predominated, accounting for 55% of killers.
- Among black marital partners, wives were just about as likely to kill their husbands as husbands were to kill their wives: 47% of the victims of a spouse were husbands and 53% were wives. Among white victims murdered by their spouse, wives were much less likely to be the killers: 38% of the

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The United States has over 3,000 counties, but more than half of all murders occur in just 75 of them, the Nation's most populous jurisdictions. This report taps a rich source of murder data — prosecutors' files in a sample of these large urban places — for detailed information on the nature and extent of a particular type of murder: those that occur within families. In addition, the report uses these files justice systems respond to family murder.

This study was possible as a result of the generous cooperation of urban prosecutors and their staffs in jurisdictions throughout the Nation. On behalf of BJS, I want to express my sincere appreciation.

Lawrence A. Greenfeld
Acting Director

victims were husbands and 62% were wives.

- Forty-five percent of family murder victims were female, compared to 18% of nonfamily murder victims.

When a mother killed her own child, the offspring she killed was more likely to be a son than a daughter: 64% sons versus 36% daughters. But when a father killed his own child, the offspring he killed was about as likely to be a daughter as a son: 52% daughters versus 48% sons.

- When a son killed a parent, his victim was about as likely to be the mother as the father: 47% mothers versus 53% fathers. But when a daughter killed a parent, her victim was more likely to be the father than the mother: 81% fathers versus 19% mothers.

- In murders of persons under age 12, the victims' parents accounted for 57% of the murderers.

- Eleven percent of all victims age 60 or older were killed by a son or daughter.

- No significant difference in the conviction rate separated family murder defendants (76%) from nonfamily murder defendants (72%).

- Convicted family murder defendants (88%) were as likely to receive a prison sentence as convicted nonfamily murder defendants (91%).

- Firearms were used in the killing of 42% of all family murder victims, compared to 63% of all nonfamily murder victims.

- Seventy-four percent of murder defendants had a prior criminal record of arrest or conviction for a crime. A substantial percentage of murder victims, 44%, also had a prior criminal record. However, 19% of family murder victims had a prior record, compared to 51% of nonfamily murder victims. Also, 56% of family murder defendants, compared to 77% of other murder defendants, had a prior record.

Compared to other murder victims, family murder victims were —

More often

- female than male: 45% versus 18% (table 2)
- under age 12: 19% versus 2% (table 2)
- age 60 or older: 12% versus 6% (table 2)
- killed during the daytime: 39% versus 25% (table 5)
- killed in the victim's own home: 82% versus 22% (table 5)

Less often

- identified as alcohol users: 33% versus 51% (table 3)
- unemployed: 7% versus 16% (table 3)
- killed by a firearm: 42% versus 63% (table 5)
- armed: 15% versus 20% (page 4)
- killed by multiple assailants: 9% versus 19% (table 6)
- identified as having a past record or arrest or conviction: 14% versus 43% (table 8).

Compared to other murder defendants, defendants in family murders—

More often

- were age 30 or older: 57% versus 32% (table 2)
- had a history of mental illness: 14% versus 3% (table 3)
- committed a daytime murder: 38% versus 24% (table 5)
- committed the murder in the defendant's own home: 64% versus 10% (table 5).

Less often

- were under age 30: 43% versus 68% (table 2)
- were identified as alcohol users: 48% versus 68% (table 3)
- were unemployed: 29% versus 37% (table 3)
- had a victim of the same sex: 34% versus 80% (table 4)
- used a firearm: 43% versus 64% (table 5)
- had a record of arrest or conviction: 56% versus 77% (table 7)
- were involved in murders in which both the defendant and the victim had a prior criminal record: 15% versus 44% (table 8).

The survey

Survey data were compiled from State prosecutors' files and were based on a representative sample of all murder cases disposed in large urban counties in 1988. The murders were committed in 1988 or earlier. The Nation's 75 largest counties (as defined by the number of arrests and population size) formed the population from which 33 counties were systematically sampled for the survey.

Within each of the 33 sampled counties, a criminal case was eligible for sampling if (a) 1 or more defendants in the case were charged with murder, and (b) at least 1 murder defendant in the case was disposed by a court in 1988. The sample consisted of 2,539 murder cases against 3,119 defendants and involving 2,655 victims. When statistically weighted, the 3,119 defendants in the sampled cases represented 9,576 murder defendants in the Nation's 75 largest counties, and the 2,655 victims represented 8,063 victims in the 75 largest counties. The weighted estimate of 8,063 victims accounted for 39% of the nationwide total of 20,860 murder victims in 1988.

Murder includes (1) intentionally causing the death of another person without extreme provocation or legal justification, (2) causing the death of another while committing or attempting to commit another crime, and (3) nonnegligent or voluntary manslaughter. Murder excludes negligent or involuntary manslaughter as well as attempted murder, which is classified as aggravated assault. Murder also includes accessory to murder, aiding and abetting a murder, and facilitating a murder. When the term murder is used in this report with-out qualification, it includes nonnegligent manslaughter. Defendant in this report refers to a person arrested for murder and presented by the police for prosecution.

Victims

Murder cases disposed in the 75 largest counties in 1988 involved an estimated 8,063 victims (table 1). Sixteen percent of victims had a family relationship to at least one defendant in the case. The most frequent specific relationship was that of spouse; the least frequent, sibling. Nonfamily victim-offender relationships

Table 1. Murder victims and defendants in the 75 largest urban counties, by victim-assailant family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Murder victims		Murder defendants	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All	8,063	100.0%	9,576	100.0%
Nonfamily	6,755	83.8	8,292	86.8
Family	1,308	16.2	1,284	13.4
Spouse	528	6.5	531	5.5
Offspring	285	3.5	258	2.7
Parent	154	1.9	150	1.6
Sibling	123	1.5	121	1.3
Other	218	2.6	224	2.3

Note: *Spouse* includes common-law spouse. *Offspring* includes grandchild and step-child. *Parent* includes grandparent and step-parent. *Sibling* includes step-sibling. *Other* includes cousin, in-law, extended family members, and other family members. Detail percentages may not add to total because of rounding.

Table 2. Sex, race, and age, by the family relationship of murder victims and defendants, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	All	Sex		Race			Age				
		Male	Female	White	Black	Other	Under 12	12-19	20-29	30-59	60 or older
Victims											
All	100%	77.8%	22.2%	43.5%	54.2%	2.3%	4.8%	10.9%	35.6 %	41.8 %	7.0 %
Nonfamily	100	82.2	17.8	44.4	53.3	2.3	2.1	12.2	38.5	41.1	6.1
Family	100	55.5	44.5	39.0	58.6	2.4	18.8	3.9	20.3	45.3	11.6
Spouse	100	40.2	59.8	41.2	56.4	2.4	0.0	0.0	27.9	65.0	7.1
Offspring	100	55.8	44.2	32.6	65.6	1.8	78.5	10.9	7.7	3.0	0.0
Parent	100	57.2	42.8	54.8	45.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	56.7	42.4
Sibling	100	73.0	27.0	33.5	64.5	2.0	8.7	2.0	43.3	42.6	3.3
Other	100	74.9	25.1	34.1	61.0	4.9	4.6	8.2	19.1	47.5	20.6
Defendants											
All	100%	89.5%	10.5 %	36.2%	61.9%	1.8%	0.1%	21.8%	42.5 %	31.4 %	4.2 %
Nonfamily	100	93.2	6.8	35.7	62.6	1.8	0.1	23.1	44.5	28.4	3.8
Family	100	65.5	34.5	39.7	58.0	2.3	0.0	13.0	29.7	50.5	6.8
Spouse	100	59.3	40.7	41.8	56.1	2.2	0.0	0.9	21.9	66.1	11.1
Offspring	100	45.4	54.6	34.5	64.5	1.0	0.0	17.2	36.4	40.3	6.0
Parent	100	81.6	18.4	49.8	50.2	0.0	0.0	38.2	30.7	29.4	1.7
Sibling	100	84.9	15.1	32.2	65.8	2.0	0.0	16.9	36.7	46.4	0.0
Other	100	83.5	16.5	38.1	56.1	5.9	0.0	18.0	35.9	41.3	4.9

Note: See table 1 notes for definitions of the family relationships.

characterized 84% of the victims, who were a stranger to, an acquaintance of, or a friend of the defendant or defendants.

Defendants

Murder cases disposed in the 75 largest counties in 1988 involved an estimated 9,576 defendants. Thirteen percent had a family relationship to at least one of the victims in the case. Nonfamily victim-offender relationships characterized 87% of the defendants who were a stranger to, an acquaintance of, or a friend of the victim or victims.

Family murder defendants and their victims comprised almost 15% of all victims and defendants recorded in the murder cases in 1988. Husbands and wives were the most likely to be involved in family murders. Spouses were 4 in 10 of all defendants and victims involved in a family murder:

Relationship of victim to assailant	Family murder victims and defendants	
	Number	Percent
All	2,592	100.0%
Spouse	1,059	40.9
Offspring	543	20.9
Parent	304	11.7
Sibling	244	9.4
Other	442	17.1

The second most frequent type of family murder, with offspring as victims and parents as assailants, were 21% of the total. (See the box on page 6 describing murders by parents of their children.) Those cases in which offspring were assailants and parents were the victims comprised 12% of all family murder victims.

As among victims, most of the nonfamily murder defendants (93%) and most of the family murder defendants (66%) were male (table 2). Offspring murder was the only murder category in which females predominated as killers. In offspring murders, mothers accounted for 55% of the defendants.

Sons, more often than daughters, were the defendants in the murders of parents: 82% versus 18%. Compared to defendants in other types of family murder, offspring accused of killing their parents were the youngest of the assailants, two-thirds being under age 30.

Husbands killed wives more frequently than wives killed husbands. Overall, husbands comprised about 60% of the assailants in spouse killings. The predominance of husbands as the defendant, however, varied by race. In black murders, wives were about as likely as husbands to be charged with the murder of their spouse. Of the 283 black-on-black spouse killings, 53% of the assailants were husbands, compared to 62% of the 218 white-on-white spouse killings. In the 11 Asian,

Table 3. Alcohol use at the time of the murder, history of mental illness, unemployment, and homelessness, by the family relationship of murder victims and defendants, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Alcohol use at the time of the murder	History of mental illness	Unemployed	Homeless
Victims				
All	47.4%	0.5%	13.8%	1.1%
Nonfamily	50.9	0.4	15.8	1.3
Family	32.7	0.9	7.4	0.2
Spouse	49.6	1.5	12.8	0.5
Offspring	5.7	1.3	0.0	0.0
Parent	25.4	0.0	4.4	0.0
Sibling	34.9	0.0	17.7	0.0
Defendants				
All	64.4%	4.3	35.3%	1.6%
Nonfamily	68.0	2.7	36.6	1.7
Family	47.6	14.3	29.1	1.2
Spouse	54.4	12.3	25.0	1.6
Offspring	29.8	15.8	28.9	0.0
Parent	28.4	25.1	33.6	2.3
Sibling	53.9	17.3	34.9	3.3

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships. "Alcohol" is coded only if present in the person.

Native American, Pacific Islander, or Alaska Native spouse murders, the husband killed the wife.

Drinking, mental illness, and unemployment

About half of the nonfamily murder victims and a third of the family murder victims consumed alcoholic drinks before the crime (table 3). Compared to victims in other types of family murder, victims in spouse murders were the most likely to have been drinking (50%). Sixty-eight percent of nonfamily murder defendants and 48% of family murder defendants were drinking at about the time of the murder.

Family murderers were more likely than nonfamily murderers to have a history of mental illness (14%). Those who killed their parents were particularly likely to have such a history (25%).

Parents who were murdered were, apart from offspring murder victims, the least likely to be unemployed.

Sex of offender and victim

Defendants in family murder cases were much less likely to be accused of murdering someone of the same sex (34% of defendants) than were defendants in murder cases not involving family members (80%) (table 4). When the sex of the victim and offender is considered, spousal murder, which by definition includes a man and a woman, provides the primary source of the difference between family and nonfamily murder. If spousal murder is excluded from consideration and "other" family members are included, murderers and victims were of the same sex in 65% of family murders (not shown in a table).

Table 4. Murder defendants with a victim of the same sex, by their family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of defendants with a victim of the same the same sex		
	All	Male	Female
All	73.7%	79.5%	21.9%
Nonfamily	79.9	84.1	25.9
Family	34.3	40.6	17.8
Spouse	0	0	0
Offspring	41.7	48.1	36.3
Parent	48.4	52.8	19.1
Sibling	69.3	736	45.1

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships.

Female defendants were more likely than male defendants to have murdered a person of the opposite sex. When a mother murdered her own child, the offspring she killed was more often a son (64%) than a daughter (36%). Among fathers who murdered, 48% of their victims were a son and 52% were a daughter.

When a daughter killed a parent, the victim was more likely to be a father (81%) than a mother (19%). Among sons who murdered a parent, 53% of the victims were a father. When a sister murdered a sibling, 55% of the victims were a brother. Among brothers who killed a sibling, 74% of the victims were a brother.

Guns used as the murder weapon

Over 60% of nonfamily murders and over 40% of family murders were committed with a gun (table 5). Compared to victims in other types of family murder, victims in spouse murders were the most likely to have died from a gunshot (53%). Offspring were the least likely to be shot to death: 1 in 5 offspring murdered by a parent died from a bullet wound.

Armed victims and victim-precipitated murders

Nineteen percent of murder victims were armed with a gun, knife, or other deadly weapon. A smaller percentage of family murder victims (15%) than of nonfamily murder victims (20%) were armed.

Table 5. Murder committed with a firearm, during daytime, or at home, by victim- assailant family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder cases		
	Firearm as murder weapon	Time and place of murder	
		Daytime	Home
Victims			
All	59.8%	27.1%	32.0%
Nonfamily	63.3	24.9	21.7
Family	41.6	38.5	81.5
Spouse	53.3	38.6	86.5
Offspring	19.6	43.4	88.0
Parent	34.8	36.4	95.6
Sibling	37.1	46.6	71.9
Defendants			
All	61.0%	25.6%	17.5%
Nonfamily	63.9	23.7	10.0
Family	42.6	37.5	63.8
Spouse	52.5	38.8	76.1
Offspring	20.6	46.3	75.4
Parent	33.9	33.8	58.8
Sibling	38.3	45.3	62.0

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships.

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of victims Precipitated the incident	
	Armed	
All	19.4%	19.1%
Nonfamily	20.4	19.5
Family	14.9	17.1
Spouse	15.2	22.6
Offspring	7.9	8.1
Parent	23.0	18.8
Sibling	11.7	20.3

Some armed victims used the deadly weapon to provoke the defendant. Others provoked the defendant with a nonlethal weapon or their fists or by pushing the defendant. Altogether, 19% of the victims in some way provoked the defendant. The provocation did not vary significantly between family (17%) and nonfamily murders (20%).

Multiple victims and assailants

Victims in murders of family members were about half as likely as nonfamily murder victims to have had multiple assailants (table 6). However, similar percentages of defendants in both types of murder (family murders, 6%, and other murders, 5%) were charged with killing more than one person. Compared to defendants in other types of family murder, defendants accused of killing their offspring or their parents were the most likely to have multiple victims. These murders were also the most likely to involve multiple assailants.

Table 6. Multiple victims and assailants, by their family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent	
	Victims with multiple assailants	Defendants with multiple victims
Victims		
All	17.5%	5.0%
Nonfamily	19.1	4.8
Family	8.7	6
Spouse	4.8	1.7
Offspring	13	11.7
Parent	13.9	12.7
Sibling	8.1	5.7

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships.

Criminal history

A little over half of the defendants in family murders, but over three-quarters of defendants in nonfamily murders, had been arrested in the past (table 7). Defendants were more likely than their victims to have a criminal history. Nevertheless, 44% of murder victims (51% nonfamily and 19% family) had a prior history of arrest or conviction.

Whether or not the victim had a criminal history, the killer had such a history in most cases (table 8). The likelihood of the killer's having a prior record was greater when the victim also had a record. Victims with a prior criminal record accounted for 44% of all victims; 83% of these victims were killed by someone with a prior criminal history. (See Methodology, page 9, for calculation of the percentage of defendants with a prior record.) For family murder victims the percentages were lower: 21% had a criminal record and 69% of these victims were killed by someone with a prior record. Among the murderers of family victims without a criminal record, 42% had such a history.

Age of victim and victim-assailant family relationship

When a person under age 12 is murdered, a family member is the best suspect, according to survey results; family members killed 63% of the child murder victims.

Table 7. Criminal history of murder victims and defendants, by their family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent with any prior arrest or conviction
Victims	
All	59.8%
Nonfamily	63.3
Family	41.6
Spouse	53.3
Offspring	19.6
Parent	34.8
Sibling	37.1
Defendants	
All	61.0%
Nonfamily	63.9
Family	42.6
Spouse	52.5
Offspring	20.6
Parent	33.9
Sibling	38.3

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships.

Table 8. Criminal history of murder victims and offenders within the same case, by their family relationship, 1988

Relationship victim to assailant	Percent of victims and defendants with a criminal history			
	Neither	Both	Victim only	Defendant only
Victims				
All	23.2%	38.9%	7.5%	32.2%
Nonfamily	16.9	43.4	7.9	31.8
Family	45.7	14.3	6.4	33.8
Defendants				
All	23.1%	38.2%	8.8%	29.9%
Nonfamily	16.3	43.9	9.2	30.5
Family	50.5	15.0	7.1	27.3

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships. Percentages of victims or defendants with a criminal history differ slightly from table 7 because of missing data.

Age of victim	Percent of murder victims	
	All	With a family relationship to assailant
All	100%	16%
Under 12	5	63
12-19	11	6
20-29	35	9
30-59	42	18
60 or older	7	27

However, a family member is an unlikely suspect in murders of persons in their teens. Among victims age 20 or older, the likelihood that a family member was the killer increased as the victim's age increased.

A family member was involved in the murder of 27% of the murder victims age 60 or older. Among all murders of persons in the oldest group, offspring as the killer accounted for 11%. Among murders of family members age 60 or older, the most frequent assailant category was not the spouse, as for younger adult victims, but the victim's offspring. The assailant was an offspring in 42% of family member victims age 60 or older and a spouse in 24%. The most frequent family member category varied by the victim's age:

Age of family victim	If family murder victim, most likely assailant	Percent of family murder victims with most likely assailant
All	Spouse	40%
Under 12	Parent	91
12-19	Parent	59
20-29	Spouse	55
30-59	Spouse	57
60 or older	Offspring	42

Murder weapons used against young children and elderly parents

When parents killed their offspring under age 12, they rarely used a firearm or knife. Firearms or knives were responsible for the deaths of 7% of offspring victims under 12. When sons and daughters killed their parents age 60 or older, in most cases they did not use a firearm or knife. Firearms or knives accounted for 44% of family murder victims age 60 or older.

Victims who were children under age 12

A parent was the assailant in the majority (57%) of family murders involving victims under 12.

For all murder victims under age 12, death was often preceded by child abuse. In 57% of cases the assailant had abused the murder victim under age 12. Among offspring murder victims who were under age 12, before their death 79% had suffered abused by the assailant.

Rape or sexual assault preceded the death of 6% of murder victims under age 12. These crimes occurred less often when the assailant was a parent, accounting for 1% of offspring murder victims under age 12.

Circumstance	Among Offspring victims			All victims under 12
	all victims	Any age	Under age 12	
Included felony sexual assault	2%	1%	1%	6%
Assailant had abused the victim	3%	62%	79%	57%

Strangulation, use of a blunt instrument, and pounding by fists or feet were among the more frequent methods of death when firearms or knives were not used.

Age of offspring victim	Percent of offspring victims	
	All	Those killed with firearm or knife
All	100%	26%
Under 12	78	7
12-19	11	93
20-29	8	100
30-59	3	100

Age of parent victim	Percent of parent victims	
	All	Those killed with firearm or knife
All	100%	72%
30-59 years	58	91
60 or older	42	44

Arrested for murder or manslaughter

The family relationship of the defendant to the murder victim made little difference in whether the defendant was charged with first-degree murder or a less serious type of homicide (table 9). When a family member was the victim, 73% of the defendants were charged with first degree murder, compared to 74% of the defendants charged with murdering a stranger or acquaintance. Compared to defendants in other types of family murder, defendants in offspring murders were the most likely to have had voluntary or nonnegligent manslaughter as the most serious arrest charge.

In more than half of the family murder cases, but in about a third of the cases of other types of victims, the arrest occurred on the day of the crime (table 10). Spouses and siblings were identified as the murderer more quickly than parents or offspring. Overall, family murder cases required less time to disposition than other types of murder cases: Prosecution was completed within 6 months for 34% of family murder defendants versus 29% of nonfamily murder defendants.

Parental murder of offspring under age 12

Prosecutors' files contained information on reasons why a parent murdered an offspring under age 12. One or more reasons were given for 62 of the total 84 offspring murder victims under age 12. The following presents reasons and the number of victims:

- Unspecified forms of child abuse (18)
- Victim's behavior, such as crying or misbehavior (15)
- Parent's emotional instability or retardation (9)
- Unwanted newborn baby (8)
- Unintended consequence of the commission of another crime (lethal conflict between the parents) (6)
- Neglect (5)
- Difficulty handling the responsibility of child rearing (3)
- Child held hostage (1).

Examination of the details concerning the method of killing covered all but 3 of the victims. By far the most frequent method of murder was beating: punching with fists, kicking, throwing, pushing, slapping, hitting (with belts, hammers, or wooden brushes), and striking body against furniture (shower head or walls).

With five of the victims counted under two or three methods of murder, specific methods and the number of victims were as follows:

- Beating (35)
- "Shaken baby syndrome" (10)
- Arson (6)
- Newborn disposed of in toilet or trash can (6)
- Drowning in bathtub (6)
- Firearm (5)
- Suffocation/strangulation (5)
- Neglect (dehydration, starvation, and failure to use infant heart monitor) (4)
- Stabbing (3)
- Starvation (2)
- Other methods, including poisoning with carbon monoxide, lethal doses of drugs, running over with a car, boiling, and putting in freezer (5).

Of the five victims who were shot to death, three died because the assailant accidentally fired a gun while committing another crime; therefore, two offspring victims under age 12 were intentionally killed with a firearm.

Table 9 Level of murder charges filed against persons arrested for murder, by victim-assailant family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants whose most serious conviction charge was		
	First-degree murder	Other murder	Voluntary or nonnegligent manslaughter
All	73.5%	24.2%	2.3%
Nonfamily	73.7	24.6	1.8
Family	72.8	21.5	5.9
Spouse	69.4	24.2	6.4
Offspring	63.1	22.8	14.1
Parent	75.2	24.8	0.0
Sibling	82.4	15.5	2.0

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships. "First-degree murder" refers to premeditated murder of felony murder; "other murder" refers to nonpremeditated murder; and "voluntary or nonnegligent manslaughter" refers to intentional killing without malice.

Table 10. Time to arrest and disposition for murder cases, by victim-assailant family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants	
	Arrested on the day of the crime	Whose prosecution ended within 6 months of crime
All	34.8%	29.1%
Nonfamily	31.7	28.6
Family	54.2	33.7
Spouse	62.3	35.8
Offspring	49.3	23.5
Parent	37.2	42.1
Sibling	55.3	34.0

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships.

Time to arrest and disposition

Justice system response to family murder

The criticism is sometimes made that police, prosecutors, and judges treat family violence less seriously than violence between strangers and other unrelated persons.* The urban county data provide

*Delbert S. Elliott, "Criminal Justice Procedures in Family Violence Crimes," in Lloyd Ohlin and Micheal Tonry (eds.), *Family Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 428.

little support for such criticism. In several important respects, the criminal justice outcomes of family murder defendants were about the same overall as those of other murder defendants. Where differences in the overall case outcome existed, the more detailed statistical testing of data removed the characteristic of nonfamily-family as a possible source of those differences.

- Compared to other murder defendants, those in family murder cases were —
- As likely to be charged with first-degree murder (table 9)
 - No more likely to have their cases diverted, rejected for prosecution, or to be acquitted (table 11)
 - Less likely to be dismissed by the court
 - As likely to have their cases result in a conviction for some crime and, specifically, as likely to be convicted of murder (table 12).

Compared to other defendants at sentencing, convicted family murder defendants, including those initially charged with murder of a family member but convicted of some other offense, were not significantly less likely to receive —

- a prison sentence: 88% versus 91% or
- a sentence to life imprisonment: 13% versus 16% (table 13).

Compared to nonfamily murder defendants, however, convicted family murderers were —

- more likely to receive a less severe sentence, probation: 7% versus 3%
- given shorter prison sentences: 13 years, on average, versus 15 years.

Analyzing differences between sentences for family murder and other types of murder

These findings of more probation sentences and shorter prison terms do not necessarily reflect greater tolerance of family violence by justice system officials. Numerous differences between family murder and other murder might possibly account for less severe sentencing for family murder. To test that possibility, regression analysis was applied to the data.

Table 11. Outcome of prosecution of murder defendants, by victim-assailant family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants, by type of outcome of prosecution							
	Diverted	Rejected	Dismissed	Acquitted	Convicted at trial	Pleaded guilty	Insanity acquittal	Other
All	0.8%	8.4%	7.0%	7.3%	33.9%	38.8%	0.5%	3.2%
Nonfamily	0.7	8.4	7.5	7.6	33.9	38.2	0.2	3.4
Family	0.9	7.9	3.8	5.8	33.5	42.8	2.8	2.4
Spouse	0.6	6.5	3.5	6.1	37.4	42.1	1.2	2.5
Offspring	1.0	11.3	3.0	5.6	37.4	35.6	3.9	2.3
Parent	0.8	4.8	5.5	5.9	22.8	47.6	9.0	3.7
Sibling	2.2	10.4	0.0	8.1	21.7	51.9	4.7	1.0

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships. *Includes murder defendants who died or whose individual cases had not been disposed.

Table 12. The most serious conviction offense of murder defendants, by victim-assailant family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants convicted of		Percent of convicted defendants, by the most serious conviction offense					Percent of convictions for less than the most serious arrest charge	
	Any crime	Murder	All	First-degree murder	Other murder	Voluntary/nonnegligent manslaughter	Other violent	other	
All	72.6%	62.8%	100%	25.6%	30.9%	29.9%	9.9%	3.7%	61.8%
Nonfamily	72.1	62.4	100	25.9	32.0	28.7	9.4	3.9	61.3
family	76.3	64.8	100	23.6	24.3	37.1	12.4	2.6	64.6
Spouse	79.5	71.2	100	21.4	25.6	42.6	8.0	2.4	62.0
Offspring	72.9	52.4	100	16.5	27.8	27.5	28.2	0.0	77.7
Parent	70.4	65.4	100	35.6	17.2	40.2	4.7	2.3	55.4
Sibling	73.7	66.7	100	10.8	28.0	52.0	6.5	2.9	77.3

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships.

Table 13. Sentences received by murder defendants convicted of murder or other crime, by victim-assailant family relationship, 1988

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of convicted murder defendants sentenced to				Mean prison term ^c
	Prison		Jail	Probation ^b	
	Total ^a	Life			
All	90.7%	15.6%	6.0%	3.3%	14.4years
Nonfamily	91.1	16.0	6.2	2.7	14.7
Family	88.4	12.8	4.5	7.1	12.8
Spouse	88.9	12.7	1.8	9.3	13.0
Offspring	85.1	8.1	10.8	4.1	12.6
Parent	95.2	17.8	4.8	0.0	12.9
Sibling	82.0	6.5	5.9	12.1	9.3

Note: See table 1 note for definitions of the family relationships. ^aIncludes those sentenced to life or death. ^bIncludes straight probation only. Probation with incarceration is reported as a sentence to prison or jail. ^cExcludes sentences to life or death.

This analysis accounts for the simultaneous effects on sentencing of the following factors:

offense seriousness (degree of murder)
nature of conviction (trial or guilty plea)
defendant criminal history
age of defendant
number of victims
victim precipitation
county (place-to-place variability in sentencing can be substantial)
race and sex of both victim and defendant.

Results showed that sentencing differences are not statistically significant (.05-level) when differences in case characteristics are taken into account.

Regression analysis did not confirm differences in sentencing severity between family and nonfamily murders because defendants in family murders less often had characteristics that are associated with the more severe sentences.

As indicated in the discussion and tables describing family murders, for example —

— Voluntary or nonvoluntary manslaughter is the least severely punished category of murder. A greater percentage of the family-murder defendants had voluntary or nonnegligent manslaughter as their most serious conviction offense.

— Having a prior arrest or conviction is associated with receiving a prison sentence and with longer terms of confinement. A smaller percentage of family-murder defendants had such a criminal history.

— Convicted murder defendants under age 30 were less likely to be sentenced to probation. A smaller percentage of family-murder defendants were younger than 30.

— Family murder convictions were less likely than nonfamily murder convictions to have resulted from a trial. Conviction based on trial rather than guilty plea increases the likelihood of any of the more severe sentences (life or long prison term).

Methodology

Sample selection

The 33 counties in the sample were selected to be representative of the Nation's 75 largest counties. The ranking of counties in which the 75 largest were identified was based on a combination of crime data (1980 and 1984 Uniform Crime Report Part I arrests) and population data (1980 population from the Census Bureau's City County Data Book). Rankings reflected the size of the prosecutors' offices. The original sample plan identified 34 counties, 1 of which declined to participate.

The following are the 33 counties whose prosecutors' offices participated in the study reported here:

Arizona

Pima

California

Los Angeles

Orange

Kern

San Diego

Riverside

Colorado

Denver

Arapahoe

Connecticut

New Haven

Florida

Dade

Orange

Broward

Illinois

Cook

Louisiana

Orleans

Maryland

Prince Georges

Massachusetts

Middlesex

Michigan

Wayne

Missouri

St. Louis

New Mexico

Bernalillo

New York

Kings

Monroe

New York

Queens

Ohio

Franklin

Montgomery

Oklahoma

Oklahoma

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia

Allegheny

Tennessee

Shelby

Texas

Dallas

Tarrant

Travis

Washington

King

A total of 2,539 murder cases were sampled. These cases were a sample of about half of all murder-charge cases disposed in the sampled 33 counties in 1988. Not eligible for sample selection were nonmurder defendants or any whose most serious charge was attempted murder, negligent or involuntary manslaughter, or vehicular homicide. In counties with 200 or fewer disposed murder cases in 1988, all were selected for inclusion in the sample. In counties with more than 200, a systematic sample of 200 was chosen. Only 6 of the 33 counties had more than 200 murder cases.

Virtually all cases meeting the 1988-disposition criterion were disposed for all defendants in the case. Of the more than 3,100 defendants on whom data were obtained, only 13 had not yet had their cases adjudicated at the time the survey was carried out in 1990. Another 25 defendants had died of suicide or other causes.

Nonavailability of cases

The survey goal to track murder cases across justice system stages was not met in nine counties. In one of the nine, legal restrictions barred access to cases rejected by the prosecutor. In the remaining eight counties, some of the sampled cases could not be located.

To an unknown degree, these data access problems help explain why no case from the nine was coded as "rejected by prosecutor." Though there is no reason for all of the unavailable cases to be rejections in all nine counties, assuming that all such cases were rejections results in an estimated rejection rate of 12%, instead of 8%, as shown in table 11. Other outcomes would have been similarly affected. The percentage of defendants tried and convicted would have been 33% instead of 34%; the percentage pleading guilty would have been 37% instead of 39%; and the percentage receiving an incarceration sentence of more than 1 year would have been 62% instead of 65%.

Computation of estimates from sample data

Case weights were applied to statistics on the sampled cases to expand them to estimates for the universe of the 75 largest counties, the key assumption being that cases not sampled were similar to the cases sampled. A case weight was the inverse of the probability that a case would be in the survey. That probability was the product of both the probability that a given county would be chosen and the probability of selection of that case in that county. Case weights were adjusted to compensate for the loss of one nonparticipating county.

Statistically weighted, the 3,119 defendants in the sample cases represented 9,576 murder defendants in the Nation's 75 largest counties. The 2,655 victims represented 8,063 victims in the 75 largest counties.

Coding of circumstances and victim-killer relationships

Information about a murder case usually included details about the relationship between the victim and the defendant as well as the circumstances that existed at the time of the murder. The rules for describing relationships and circumstances were those used by local police in reporting murder cases to the FBI. These rules were developed by the FBI for publication of its Supplemental Homicide Reports. The reporting rules include a set of codes to describe the principal victim-assailant relationship and the circumstances in which they were involved at the time the murder occurred.

In the survey reported here, however, provision was made for coding as many as three kinds of relationships and three kinds of circumstances. For example, if the victim was the assailant's brother and was also the assailant's drug supplier, both a family relationship and a drug relationship would be recorded. Likewise, more than one type of circumstance might have existed at the time of the murder. Altogether, 79 separate relationship codes and 85 circumstance codes were available for coding cases.

Among all pairs of victims and assailants found in the prosecutors' murder files, a majority required only a single relationship or circumstance code. The percentages requiring more are as follows:

Number of codes used	Percent of victim and assailant pairs in coding of	
	Relationships	Circumstances
2	8.4%	40.0%
3 or more	.3	8.6

Response rates

Except as noted below, this report focused exclusively on characteristics that were successfully obtained in a high percentage of sample cases ("response rate").

The case records identified age, race, sex, and ethnicity for nearly all defendants (approximately 98%). The same was true of victims, except that the victim's age was available in only 16% of cases. Also obtained in nearly all cases were the relationships between victims and defendants; the circumstances preceding the homicide; the arrest or indictment charge; and whether the defendant was convicted, and if so, the conviction offense. In incarceration or probation cases, the length of the term of sentence was usually known.

Defendant criminal history was available in three-quarters of the cases, but victim criminal history was obtained in only a third of the cases. The juvenile portion of the criminal history information was probably less complete than the adult portion.

Victim and offender information compiled on both drug use at the time of the offense and drug use history were not presented in the report because of concerns about data credibility. Drug use, for example, was far below what previous surveys have documented. Also, the data show drug use to have been more common among victims than defendants, a finding that did not seem believable. Consequently, survey data on drug consumption and type of drug consumed were not used.

Source of percentages of defendants who had a criminal record and whose victim also had a criminal record

Overall —
44% of victims had a criminal record (from table 8: 36.9% + 7.5%).
83% of these victims were killed by someone with a prior record (36.9/44.4).

Family murders —
21% of victims had a criminal record (14.3% + 6.4%).
69% of these victims were killed by someone with a prior record (14.3/20.7).

78% of victims had no criminal record (45.7% + 33.6%).
43% of these victims were killed by someone with a prior record (33.6/78.3).

Comparison with other BJS murder data collections

Selected data reported here can be compared with other BJS publications that contain information on murder cases.

Conviction rate

The 73% rate of conviction reported in table 12 is higher than the 66% reported for murder defendants in the National Pretrial Reporting Program (NPRP). See table 13 in *Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties, 1988*, BJS, NCJ-122385, April 1990. The NPRP studied a sample of felony cases obtained from court records in 40 of the 75 largest counties in the Nation. Those cases were followed to disposition or for up to a maximum of 1 year.

The following two reports give data for cases accepted by the prosecutor. The comparable conviction rate in this report would be 79%, rather than 73%, after deducting the cases rejected for prosecution (table 11).

The Offender-Based Transaction Statistics (OBTS) program reported a 76% conviction rate among murder cases that were prosecuted in 14 States. See table 4 in *Tracking Offenders, 1988*, BJS Bulletin, NCJ 29861, June 1991. The OBTS uses arrest records, disposition information, and data from fingerprint cards that are submitted by local law enforcement agencies to State criminal information repositories. This 76% conviction rate is not measurably different than the 79% estimate in this report.

Conviction rates of murder cases filed in court are reported for a selection of 10 counties in table 2 in *The Prosecution of Felony Arrests, 1988*, BJS, NCJ-130914, February 1992. The local prosecutors in those 10 counties provided the data. The rates in those counties among murder cases disposed during 1988 ranged from

57% to 84%. Four of ten had rates higher than the 79% reported here.

Number of murder convictions

Table 12 showed 63% of murder defendants convicted of murder, for a total of approximately 6,000 convictions. The comparable number in the National Judicial Reporting Program (NJRP) for the 75 largest counties in the United States during 1988 is approximately 5,000, which is not measurably different than the 6,000 estimate reported here. See table 2.1a in National Judicial Reporting Program, 1988, BJS, NCJ-135945, December 1992. However, the 63% of defendants convicted of murder is higher than the comparable 48% reported by the NPRP.

Sentences to prison, jail, or probation

The NJRP and NPRP reports include the sentences received by those convicted of murder, comparable to table 13 of this report. All three studies show that of such defendants, more than 90% were sentenced to a prison term, fewer than about 5% were sentenced to jail, and about 3% were sentenced to probation without any incarceration. The OBTS, however, reported these percentages as 81%, 11%, and 5% respectively.

John M. Dawson and Patrick A. Langan, Ph.D., wrote this report. Dawson monitored the Prosecution of Felony Arrests project, through which the report's data were collected. Peter Brien verified the data. Tom Hester edited and produced it, assisted by Priscilla Middleton. Marilyn Marbrook, assisted by Jayne Robinson, Jodi Brown, and Priscilla Middleton, administered the final production.

Abt Associates personnel for the data collection phase were as follows: Barbara Boland (survey design), Jan Chaiken (sampling plan), Wayne Logan (case classification scheme and data form design), Lynn Warner (coordination of field operations), Marcia Schieck and Mark Searight (field data collection), and Bill Martin (database design).

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Related reading

Data used in this report were previously used in the report by John M. Dawson and Barbara Boland (Murder in Large Urban Counties, 1988, BJS Special Report, NCJ-140614, May 1993).

The data presented in this report may be obtained from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data at the University of Michigan, 1-800-999-0960. The name of the data set is Murder in Large Urban Counties, 1988 (**ICPSR 9907**). The data are available in either dBASE or SAS format.

Standard errors

Data collected in this murder study were from a sample rather than a complete enumeration. Because counties and cases were sampled, a sampling error (standard error) is associated with each number in the report. In general, if the difference between two numbers is greater than twice the standard error for that difference, we can say that we are at least 95% confident that the two numbers are in fact different; that is, the apparent difference is not simply the result of surveying a sample rather than the entire population.

Similarly, if the difference between two numbers is greater than 1.6 standard errors, we are at least 90% confident that the two numbers are different. In this report the term "statistically significant" was used to denote a difference in which we have at least 90% confidence. Except where explicitly indicated otherwise, all differences discussed in this report had a confidence level at or above 90 percent.

Why a standard error may be large relative to the difference it pertains to includes the two most typical reasons: (1) the measurements or observations being compared (such as a sex difference in average prison sentence length) are highly variable from one case to another and (2) a small sample size.

Standard errors for selected key variables in the report are presented below.

Estimates of 1 standard error for text table page 3

Relationship of victim to assailant	Family murder victims and defendants	
	Victims	Defendants
All	724.0	880.5
Nonfamily	105.0	109.4
Family	634.9	786.8
Spouse	66.1	65.1
Offspring	31.2	26.7
Parent	23.1	22.6
Sibling	21.6	21.1
Other	23.8	24.8

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 2

Relationship of victim to assailant	Sex		Race			Age				
	Male	Female	White	Black	Other	Under 12	12-19	20-29	30-59	60 or over
Victims										
All	0.7%	0.7%	2.8%	3.0%	0.3%	0.5%	0.7%	1.0%	1.2%	0.4%
Nonfamily	0.8	0.8	2.8	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.8	1.1	1.2	0.4
family	2.1	2.1	3.4	3.6	0.6	2.6	0.7	2.1	2.7	1.4
Spouse	3.2	3.2	5.3	--	0.8	0.0	0.0	2.7	2.6	1.9
Offspring	5.2	5.2	5.0	--	1.4	4.0	2.1	2.8	2.3	0.0
Parent	6.4	6.4	5.7	--	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	6.2	6.3
Sibling	6.2	6.2	7.7	--	1.5	4.4	1.6	7.9	7.5	2.8
Other	4.3	4.3	5.1	--	2.6	2.2	3.0	4.0	5.7	4.2
Defendants										
All	0.6%	0.6%	2.6%	2.8%	0.3%	0.3%	0.9%	0.7%	0.9%	0.3%
Nonfamily	0.5	0.5	2.7	2.9	0.3	--	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.4
family	2.1	2.1	3.1	3.2	0.6	0.0	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.0
Spouse	3.3	3.3	5.0	5.1	0.8	0.0	0.5	--	3.2	1.6
Offspring	3.9	3.9	4.9	5.2	0.8	0.0	4.0	4.2	4.5	3.0
Parent	4.7	4.7	5.2	5.2	0.0	0.0	6.3	4.7	5.4	1.4
Sibling	6.0	6.0	7.8	7.5	1.6	0.0	5.4	7.4	7.8	0.0
Other	3.6	3.6	4.8	4.9	2.8	0.0	4.0		4.7	1.8

--Standard error was not calculated.

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 3

Relationship of victim to assailant	Alcohol use at the time of the murder	History of mental illness	Unemployed	Homeless
Victims				
All	1.6%	0.1%	--	0.3%
Nonfamily	1.9	0.1	--	0.3
Family	2.8	0.3	--	0.2
Spouse	3.2	0.7	7.7	0.4
Offspring	1.7	0.7	0.0	0.0
Parent	7.4	0.0	2.5	0.0
Sibling	9.4	0.0	1.6	0.0
Defendants				
All	1.9%	0.4%	3.0%	0.3%
Nonfamily	1.9	0.3	3.2	0.4
Family	3.5	1.6	3.2	0.5
Spouse	5.7	2.5	4.1	1.0
Offspring	7.1	3.7	7.0	0.0
Parent	8.9	5.2	9.9	1.7
Sibling	9.6	5.2	10.4	2.7

--Standard error was not calculated.

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 4

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants with a victim of the same sex	
	Male	Female
All	0.8%	1.9
Nonfamily	0.8	2.5
Family	2.2	3.5
Spouse	0.0	0.0
Offspring	6.3	7.7
Parent	7.5	8.0
Sibling	6.1	21.3

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 6

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent	
	Victims with multiple assailants	Defendants with multiple victims
All	0.8%	0.4%
Nonfamily	0.9	0.4
Family	1.3	1.0
Spouse	1.4	0.6
Offspring	3.3	3.1
Parent	4.6	3.4
Sibling	4.7	2.4

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 7

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent with any prior arrest or conviction
Victims	
All	2.4%
Nonfamily	2.7
Family	2.4
Spouse	5.2
Offspring	1.2
Parent	7.2
Sibling	10.8
Defendants	
All	1.0%
Nonfamily	1.1
Family	2.5
Spouse	3.3
Offspring	4.5
Parent	6.6
Sibling	7.7

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 5

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants whose		
	Firearm as murder weapon	Time and place of murder	Home
All	1.6%	1.2%	0.8%
Nonfamily	1.6	1.3	0.8
Family	3.0	2.4	1.6
Spouse	4.3%	3.1%	2.1%
Offspring	3.7	5.2	2.9
Parent	6.2	5.7	1.5
Sibling	7.3	8.6	6.4
Defendants			
All	1.5%	1.2%	0.7%
Nonfamily	1.5	1.4	0.5
Family	3.0	2.4	1.7
Spouse	4.4%	2.8%	2.1
Offspring	3.6	5.6	4.0
Parent	5.9	5.2	5.7
Sibling	7.3	8.5	6.7

Estimates of 1 standard error for text table column 2 page 5

Age of victim	Percent of murder Victim with a family relationship to assailant
All	0.7%
Under 12	4.6
12-19	1.1
20-29	1.0
30-59	1.0
60 or older	2.8

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 8

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of victims and defendants with a criminal history			
	Neither	Both	Victim only	Defendant only
Victims				
All	2.0%	2.2%	0.8%	2.2%
Nonfamily	2.1	2.5	0.9	2.6
Family	3.6	2.2	1.6	3.8
Defendants				
All	1.9%	2.2%	0.9%	2.0%
Nonfamily	1.9	2.4	1.0	2.3
Family	3.6	2.3	1.8	3.4

Estimates of 1 standard error for text table column 3 page 4

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of victims	
	Armed	Precipitated the incident
All	0.7%	0.8%
Nonfamily	0.8	0.8
Family	1.8	1.9
Spouse	2.7	3.0
Offspring	1.5	1.5
Parent	5.7	5.9
Sibling	4.8	6.9

Estimates of 1 standard error for text table column 2 page 5

Age of family victim	If family murder victims, most likely assailant	Percent of family murder victims with most likely assailant
All	Spouse	3.3%
Under 12	Parent	3.1
12-19	Parent	9.7
20-29	Spouse	6.0
30-59	Spouse	3.4
60 or older	Offspring	7.0

Estimates of 1 standard error for text table column 3 page 5

Circumstance	All murder victim	Offspring victims		All murder victims under 12
		Any age	Under age 12	
Included felony sexual assault	0.2%	0.8%	1.0%	1.7%
Assailant had abused the victim	0.4%	4.8%	5.2%	5.4%

Estimates of 1 standard error for text table page 6

Age of offspring victim	Percent of offspring victims	
	All	Those killed with firearm or knife
All	0.0	4.1%
Under 12	4.0	2.6
12-19	2.1	4.7
20-29	2.8	0.0
30-59	2.3	0.0

Age of parent victim	Percent of parent victims	
	All	Those killed with firearm or knife
All	0.0	6.8%
30-59	6.2	4.0
60 or older	6.3	10.9

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 11

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants by type of outcome of prosecution							
	Diverted	Rejected	Dismissed	Acquitted	Convicted at trial	Pleaded guilty	Insanity acquittal	Other
All	0.2%	2.2%	0.6%	0.6%	1.9%	2.4%	0.1%	0.4%
Nonfamily	0.2	2.1	0.6	0.6	1.9	2.4	0.1	0.3
Family	0.4	2.6	1	1.1	2.7	3.5	0.8	1.5
Spouse	0.4	3.3	1.2	1.6	3.9	4.5	0.6	1.6
Offspring	0.8	3.7	1.3	2	4.4	5.3	2.3	1.7
Parent	0.3	2.1	3.5	2.2	4.9	7.0	3.0	3.1
Sibling	1.7	5.4	0	3.3	5.8	8	2.1	0.4

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 9

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants whose most serious conviction charge was		
	First-degree murder	Other murder	Voluntary or nonnegligent manslaughter
All	4.5%	4.4%	0.3%
Nonfamily	4.6	4.6	0.3
Family	3.9	3.6	1.1
Spouse	3.6	3.8	1.8
Offspring	6.5	5.3	3.9
Parent	6.6	6.6	0.0
Sibling	6.2	6.1	1.6

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 12

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants convicted of		Percent of convicted defendants by the most serious conviction offense		Percent of convictions for less than the most serious arrest charge
	Any crime	Murder	First-degree murder	Other murder	
All	72.6%	62.8%	25.6%	30.9%	29.9%
Nonfamily	72.1	62.4	25.9	32.0	28.7
Family	76.3	64.8	23.6	24.3	37.1
Spouse	79.5	71.2	21.4	25.6	42.6
Offspring	72.9	52.4	16.5	27.8	27.5
Parent	70.4	65.4	35.6	17.2	40.2
Sibling	73.7	66.7	10.8	28.0	52.0

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 10

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of murder defendants	
	Arrested on the day of the crime	Whose prosecution ended within 6 months of crime
All	1.1%	2.3%
Nonfamily	1.0	2.3
Family	2.1	3.1
Spouse	2.8	4.2
Offspring	6.0	4.7
Parent	6.4	5.3
Sibling	7.3	7.6

Estimates of 1 standard error for table 13

Relationship of victim to assailant	Percent of convicted murder defendants sentenced to:			Mean prison term
	Prison		Probation	
	Total	Life		
All	0.7%	0.7%	0.4%	0.5years
Nonfamily	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.5
Family	1.4	1.4	1.2	0.9
Spouse	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.3
Offspring	2.9	3.5	1.4	1.8
Parent	2.5	1.1	0.0	1.1
Sibling	6.4	6.4	5.9	1.3