

# Homicides in Jackson County: An Exploration of the Data

In recent years, Kansas City has ranked among the nation's most violent cities. In this analysis, we examine more closely how the law enforcement and criminal justice system responded in 2019 to the challenge of solving and disposing of homicide cases.

The data presented here comes from police agencies in Jackson County, which are required by the U.S. Department of Justice Department, to report their crime data. It is released every October. Data for this analysis also is drawn from the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office's records management system.

“These are amazingly strong results,” said Jean Peters Baker, Jackson County Prosecutor. “I expect others will be surprised by this data because they often hear that prosecutors fail to deliver good outcomes. But this data supports what prosecutors know, our office produces many of the most talented lawyers in our state.

“We will continue to improve our efforts. We visit every homicide scene and we've developed a robust review process for each homicide presented to us.

“Reducing violence in our city is a great challenge,” Baker added. “We must all focus together – community, law enforcement and the criminal justice system – to find new ways to benefit victims and improve the safety of our community.”

Overall, the analysis of 2019 data showed:

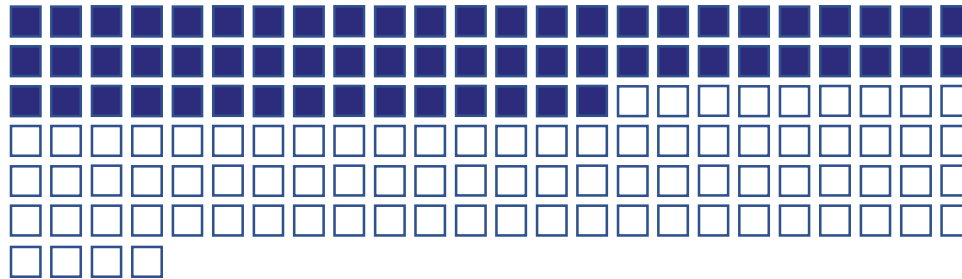
- A majority of homicides in Jackson County do not result in criminal charges because they are not solved by police and presented to prosecutors. The Kansas City (MO) Police Department by year's end solved or cleared 43 percent of the homicides that occurred – a total of 63 cases, out of 148 total homicides in 2019.
- Not all KCPD-reported homicides are in Jackson County, but the vast majority are. According to KCPD's daily homicide analysis, six of Kansas City's 148 homicides were reported by KCPD in Clay or Platte counties.

- Outside of KCPD, 20 homicides were reported by other Jackson County police agencies in 2019. Police solved 19 by year's end, and prosecutors filed 17. Prosecutors also charged as a homicide a drug overdose not reported initially by Lee's Summit Police as a homicide.
- In 2019, police agencies in Jackson County, including KCPD, presented 112 homicide cases to the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office.
- Of the 112 cases, 15 were declined due to self-defense issues, lack of evidence and other reasons, including a defendant's death or wrong jurisdiction. Charges were filed in 85 of those cases, while 19 were under review at year's end.
- The Jackson County Prosecutor's Office had a 98.4 percent conviction percentage for homicide cases it disposed of in 2019. Of 61 total homicide cases disposed in 2019, not one was dismissed. And only one case was lost. That defendant, it should be noted, remains in prison on a related case and he also faces a firearms charge in federal court related to the conduct originally charged in the state's homicide case.
- The average prison sentence for murder convictions in Jackson County in 2019 was 23.2 years. Among those cases resulting in conviction in 2019 were five Murder 1st Degree life-without-parole verdicts. In comparison, the three-year average (2015-17) for Murder 2nd Degree sentences in the state of Missouri, reported by the Missouri Department of Corrections, was 21.7 years, while Murder 1st Degree averaged 30 years for that same period of time.

# 2019 Homicide Analysis

## Jackson County Prosecutor's Office

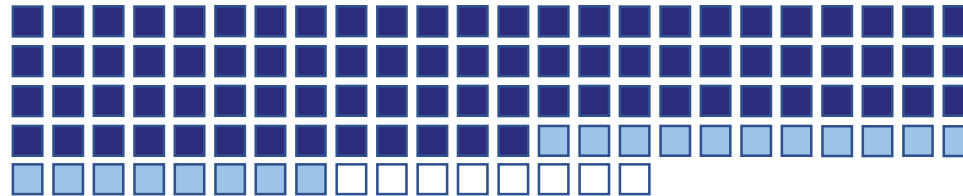
Out of **148 total homicides** in Kansas City, Missouri\*, KCPD solved **63** by year's end.



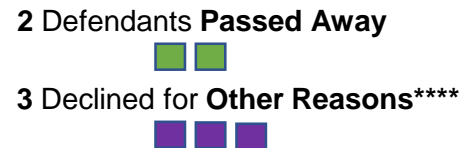
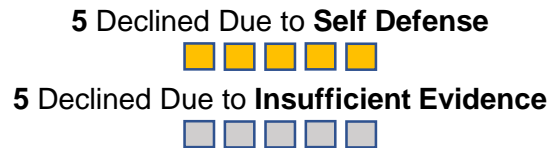
Of **20** homicides in Eastern Jackson County, police solved **19** by year's end\*\*.



Police agencies in Jackson County submitted **112** homicide cases to the Prosecutor's Office  
The Prosecutor's Office filed charges in **85\*\*\*\*** cases and is currently reviewing charges in **19** cases



The Prosecutor's Office declined charges in **15** cases, including **3** from previous years.



\* Six homicides occurred in Clay or Platte or Cass counties. Also, some 2019 homicides have been solved in 2020.

\*\* Not included in solved cases is one case charged by prosecutors as a murder, although it was initially reported by Lee's Summit Police as an accidental drug overdose.

\*\*\* Seven cases were submitted in late 2018.

\*\*\*\*Two uncertified juvenile cases referred to Family Court and one 2012 case wrongly listed in records system as being charged.

\*\*\*\*\*This analysis does not include vehicular fatalities.



# 2019 Homicide Analysis

## Jackson County Prosecutor's Office

The Prosecutor's Office disposed of **61** homicide cases.



Of those cases, **20** went to trial with **19** guilty verdicts and **1** not guilty verdict\*.



Also, **41** defendants entered a guilty plea in those homicide cases in 2019.



Average sentence given for a Murder 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree conviction in Jackson County in 2019\*\*:

**23.2 years**



\* Defendant is incarcerated in Missouri Department of Corrections (MDOC) for 5 years on a subsequent firearms charge stemming from the homicide.  
\*\* The three-year average sentence (2015-2017) for Murder 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree in Missouri was 21.7 years, while the average for Murder 1<sup>st</sup> Degree was 30 years.

