

University of Massachusetts Boston

ScholarWorks at UMass Boston

William Monroe Trotter Institute Publications

William Monroe Trotter Institute

10-2007

Crime in the African-American Neighborhood

Alix Cantave Ph.D.

University of Massachusetts Boston, alix.cantave@umb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umb.edu/trotter_pubs



Part of the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cantave, Alix Ph.D., "Crime in the African-American Neighborhood" (2007). *William Monroe Trotter Institute Publications*. 2.

https://scholarworks.umb.edu/trotter_pubs/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the William Monroe Trotter Institute at ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in William Monroe Trotter Institute Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact scholarworks@umb.edu.



THE WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER INSTITUTE
University of Massachusetts Boston

TROTTER REPORT

Crime in the African-American Neighborhood

Findings of a Community Roundtable on Crime
Sponsored by the Trotter Institute, Spring 2007

Report By
Alix Cantave, Ph.D.

October 2007

The William Monroe Trotter Institute

This report represents the observations and findings of a roundtable discussion that the William Monroe Trotter Institute, under the directorship of Dr. Barbara Lewis, convened on the campus of the University of Massachusetts Boston in the Spring of 2007. Dr. Milton Butts, Assistant Professor of Sociology, moderated the meeting. Dr. Cheryl Holmes served as research consultant and liaison for the project. Dr. Alix Cantave conducted additional research for the report and prepared the findings. Members of the Trotter Staff who assisted with the roundtable include Yvonne Gomes-Santos, Department Assistant; Eva Hendricks, Executive Assistant, and Laima O'Brien, Administrative Assistant.

The William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black History and Culture was founded in 1984 to address the needs and concerns of the Black community and communities of color in Boston and Massachusetts through research, technical assistance, and public service. Many forms of technical assistance are provided to community groups, organizations, and public agencies. The institute sponsors public forums as a means of disseminating research and involving the community in the discussion of public policy and other issues impacting Blacks locally and nationally.

The Institute publishes the Trotter Review, a journal of articles addressing current Black studies, race, and race relations in the United States and abroad. The Institute also publishes research reports and occasional papers on a broad range of topics in the areas of education, employment and training, public health, economic and community development, social policy, as well as race relations. Research and other institute activities are facilitated by research and faculty associates. The Trotter Institute has conducted research for foundations across the nation, and also works with international organizations.

THE WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER INSTITUTE
University of Massachusetts Boston

Crime in the African-American Neighborhood:
A Report of the Trotter Roundtable on Crime

Author:

Alix Cantave, Ph.D., Associate Director, William Monroe Trotter Institute

Editing:

Patricia Peterson

Roundtable Facilitator:

Milton Butts, Jr., Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Sociology, UMass Boston

October 2007

Contents

Preface by Barbara Lewis.....	3
Introduction.....	5
Boston’s Predominantly Black Neighborhoods.....	6
Homicides and Violent Crime in Boston.....	8
Violent and Property Crimes.....	12
Reported Arrest.....	15
Causes of Violence in Black Neighborhoods.....	17
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	20

Preface

Recently, I saw a play entitled, *Well*, at the Huntington. It was set in the 1960s, which for blacks, women, political dissenters, and other marginalized folks, was a time when a better future seemed possible. A woman of conscience in a Midwestern city decided that she would heal her community by integrating it. She didn't believe in segregation, didn't think people should be separated just because of how they looked. As a white woman of some privilege, she had not lived around black folk much, but she knew that things had to change and be more open than before. She rallied everyone in her community so that they could interact on a daily basis. For a while, she created a version of Camelot, an oasis of new possibility. But she got older and couldn't keep up the fight. The hopes of the 1960s faded. In the ensuing decades, the nation's cities have gotten more dangerous. They have also gotten more expensive. People are losing their homes. And many of those who have managed to hold on are often afraid to walk out the door, imprisoned in their own homes due to urban violence. Our racial attitudes affect what is happening in and to our cities. Social and racial segregation and the concentration of crime and other social ills in our inner cities have made it difficult for us to really think of ourselves as one nation, living together on equal terms.

All is not *Well* in Boston.

Fifty years after that hopeful time of the 1960s, segregation is still a national problem, and Boston is known as one of the most segregated cities in the nation. The City on a Hill is a citadel of privilege, but, for the most part, blacks and people of color are kept on the outskirts, fighting for minor gains. They are seen as predators, as unworthy. Many of our social problems today are rooted in the kind of violent, divisive thinking that posits that some people are born more deserving than others, simply because of who they are, and that causes segregation to thrive.

Crime is one of the more critical problems in the black community today. Our young folk are killing each other. Some of our older folk don't know how to connect to the youth, and some of the youth have built walls around themselves, without windows or doors. The numbers tell a bleak tale. We have a fatality problem. Last year, in 2006, Boston experienced 74 fatalities due to violence. Eighty percent of those fatalities were black. Young men represent the demographic hardest hit. Fifty-one percent of those killed last year were under the age of twenty-five. They didn't get the chance to grow up, to become men, to become fathers. Four Boston communities were the hardest hit: Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park.

We are here to participate in a roundtable conversation about a major threat to our city and our community, the rate of violent crime we experience, the ways in which random death walks our streets and is part of the air we breathe. Not long ago, I got a call from a woman who knew William Monroe Trotter. She is well up into her eighties now, but she was a child in the late 1920s. One day she decided to go to the library in Boston, but when she entered the librarian told her she could not borrow a book. She went home crying, and told her mother what happened. Her mother knew Trotter, and called him. He told her he would see about the matter. The next day he visited the library, and the children in the neighborhood were able to borrow books from that day forward. The problem now facing the community may be bigger than getting a book from a library, but we still have to find a way to make things better for the children, for the

community. The William Monroe Trotter Institute called this session to determine what new partnerships can be forged and what new strategies we might consider in this project that impacts us all. Let us use this as a healing opportunity. We are committed to healing our communities, not just for a year, not just for a decade, but for the long term. We want to know how to do that. There are some questions that we have to pose and some answers that we have to find. It is our hope that five years from now, we can look back and say that we came together and talked and made plans and acted on them and began a new phase of healing, one that will last longer than a decade.

Barbara Lewis, Ph.D.
Director, William Monroe Trotter Institute

Introduction

On March 28, 2007, the William Monroe Trotter Institute held a roundtable on crime in predominantly black neighborhoods. More than fifty individuals who represented a broad array of perspectives and experiences took part in the roundtable. Participants included religious leaders, elected officials, educators, academics, law enforcement officials, social services providers, youth workers and youths, and community activists. Participants were eager to examine, discuss, and contribute to the understanding of:

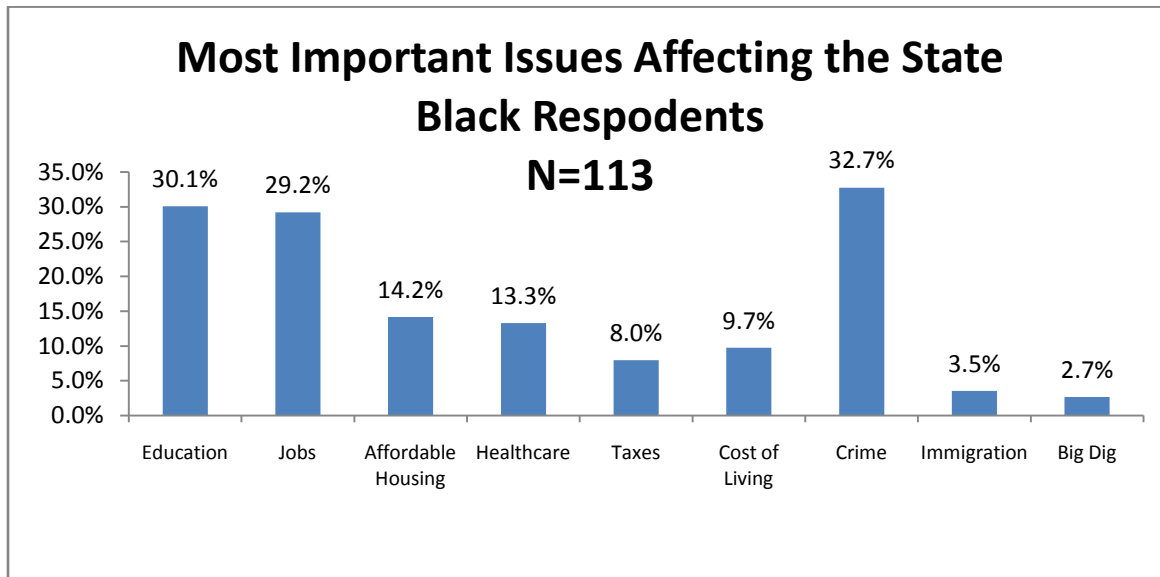
- What accounts for the high rate of violent crime in Boston's predominantly black neighborhoods?
- Is there adequate parent, youth, adult, and institutional accountability?
- Are there sufficient resources allocated to crime prevention versus intervention?
- What new partnerships can be formed to address some of these issues?
- What role can the Trotter Institute at UMass play in the process?

The Crime Roundtable was the first of a series of five roundtables that the Trotter Institute intends to convene between 2007 and 2008. Each roundtable will focus on a topic that Black residents in the Boston area identified as the most important issues they face. In a survey conducted in November 2006, by the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies in collaboration with the William Monroe Trotter Institute, the Mauricio Gaston Institute, and the Institute for Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston, blacks stated that crime is the most important issue affecting them. The survey of 755 Massachusetts residents, which includes 113 black respondents, polled persons on issues of race relations, immigration, confidence in public institutions, political behavior and other policy related subjects. Below is a list of five subjects that blacks identified as being of most importance.

- Crime
- Education
- Jobs
- Affordable housing
- Healthcare

The Crime Roundtable acknowledged that in the past two years, Boston has been caught in an upsurge in violent crime that disproportionately affects the black community, particularly young black men. Data from the Boston Police Department show that black men under the age of 24 living in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury are more likely to be victims of violence than any other group in Boston. Community leaders, elected officials, law enforcement officials, and other community safety stakeholders who participated in the Roundtable implied that the trends and patterns of the crimes being committed suggest significant differences from the 1985–95 wave of violence when an average of 99 homicides was committed in Boston per year. As a result, new strategies and prevention methods are required to curtail the rising homicide rate and other

violent crime in the City’s predominantly minority neighborhoods. Organizations such as the Ten Point Coalition, the Black Ministerial Alliance, and the Ella J. Baker House host regular meetings as part of community-based efforts to address rising neighborhood violence. Issues such as street gangs, youth unemployment, and the high school dropout rate, which contribute to youth and general violence persist and are, in fact, growing.



Source: *Transformation and Taking Stock: A Summary of Selected Findings from the McCormack Graduate School Diversity Survey.*

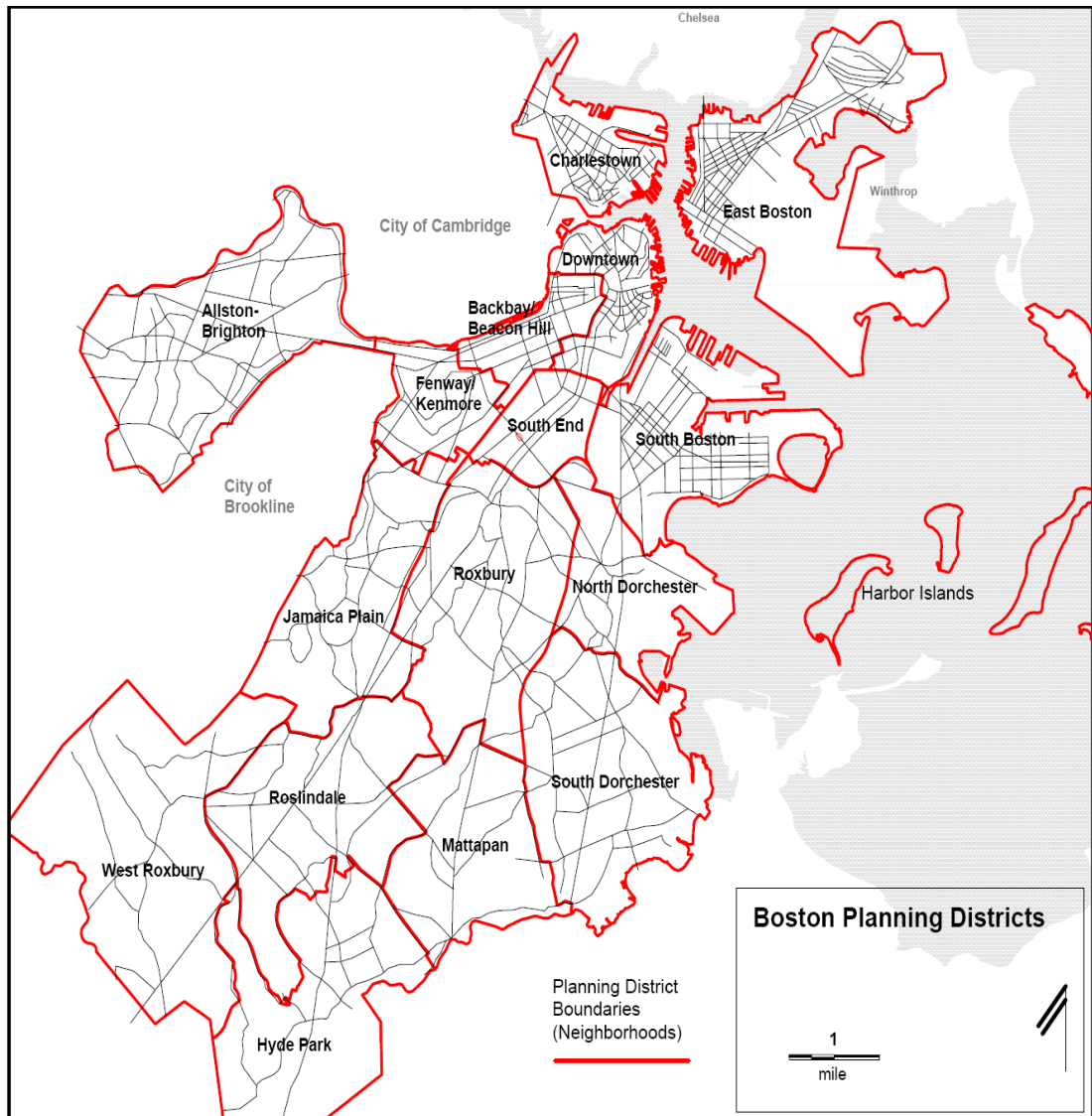
This report recapitulates the main ideas from the Crime Roundtable and summarizes the key points including recommendations from the participants for violence reduction and prevention strategies. The report also contains an overview of the factors participants believe contribute to the increase in violent crime in Boston. The report starts with a brief demographic description of the predominantly black neighborhoods and a synopsis of recently reported homicides and other violent crime in these neighborhoods.

Boston’s Predominantly Black Neighborhoods

There are three neighborhoods in Boston in which blacks or African-Americans are the majority group. These neighborhoods are Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. Hyde Park and the South End also have significant black populations according to the 2000 Census. In fact, Hyde Park has a higher percentage of blacks than Dorchester, but they are not the majority group in that neighborhood. Based on that Census, Boston had a total population of 589,141, of which 140,305 or 24 percent were black or African-American. Boston is a highly segregated city with 70 percent of the black population in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury. In 2000, Mattapan had a population of 37,607 of which 77 percent were black or African-American. About 21 percent of Boston’s black population was in Mattapan. The population of Roxbury was 56,658 of which 63 percent were black or African-American. Twenty five percent of the City’s black population lived in Roxbury. Dorchester was and still is the largest neighborhood in Boston with a population of 92,115 of which blacks represented 36 percent in 2000. About 24 percent of the

Black population lived in Dorchester. Hyde Park is not known as a black neighborhood, but blacks made up 39 percent of its total population of 31,598. Including Hyde Park and the South End, 83 percent of the black population was concentrated in five of the City's 15 neighborhoods. Each neighborhood falls within a Police District of which there are 12. The three predominantly black neighborhoods correspond to the following Police Districts:

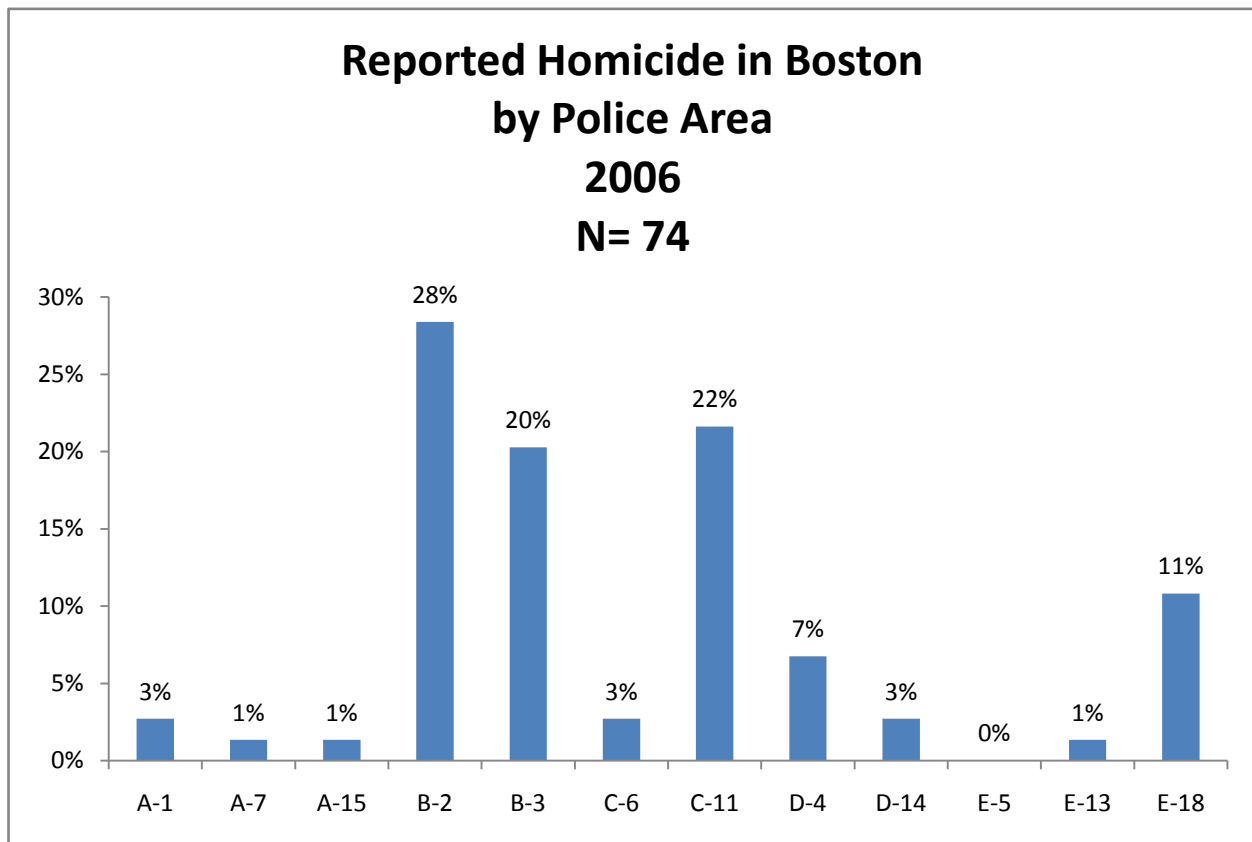
- B-2—Roxbury
- B-3—Mattapan
- C-11—Dorchester



Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority

Homicides and Violent Crime in Boston

In 2006, a total of 74 homicides were reported in the City of Boston, a 90 percent increase from 2003, and the highest number of incidents in 10 years. As of May 16, 2007, 22 homicides had been reported, one more than the same time last year. A total of 81 percent or 60 of the 74 homicides were in four Police Districts (B-2, B-3, C-11 and E-18) including the three that consist of the neighborhoods with the largest percentage of Black residents. Police District E-18 is primarily Hyde Park. In fact, four out of every five murders in 2006 occurred in one of those four Districts, a rate that more than doubles their share of the City's population. Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Hyde Park had 37 percent or 217,978 of the total population of the City. Roxbury had 21 homicides or 28 percent of all homicides in Boston followed by Dorchester with 16 or 22 percent, Mattapan with 15 or 20 percent and Hyde Park with eight or 11 percent. As of May 2007, 14 of the 22 homicides are in B-2, B-3 and C-11. If this rate continues, the number of homicides will surpass last year's decade-high of 74 and the majority will be in the City's black and minority neighborhoods.

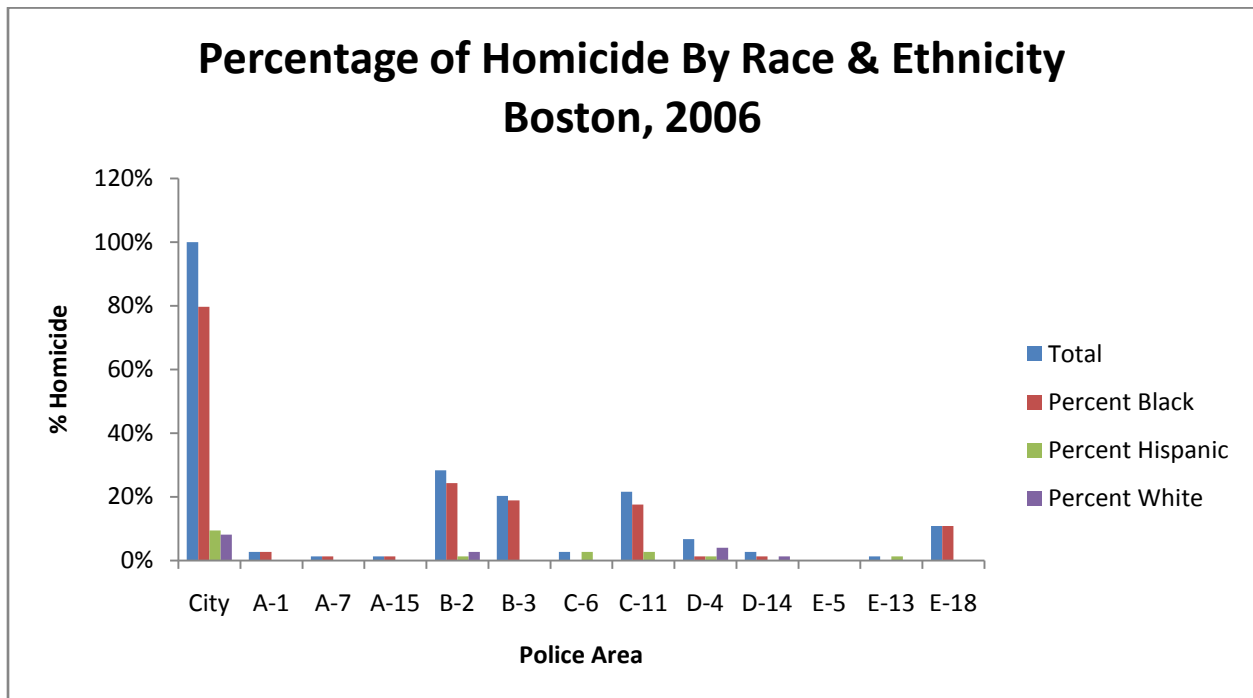


Source: Boston Police Department Office of Strategic Planning & Research Bureau of Administration & Technology

Homicide victims were more likely to be black males under 25 years of age. Blacks accounted for 80 percent of the homicide victims in 2006. Latinos and whites represented 9 percent and 7 percent, respectively. Women of all races and ethnicity made up 9 percent of the victims as did Latino men. No Latina was among the seven women killed in Boston in 2006. Black males

represented 73 percent or 54 of all the murder victims in the City. Five black women, one Asian, and one White woman were among the murder victims. Both the Asian and white females were killed indoors while less than half of the black female victims were killed inside. While women were less likely to be victims of street violence, three of the five black female victims were killed in the street. Law enforcement officials and youth workers view the increased number of female violent crime victims as a new and alarming trend.

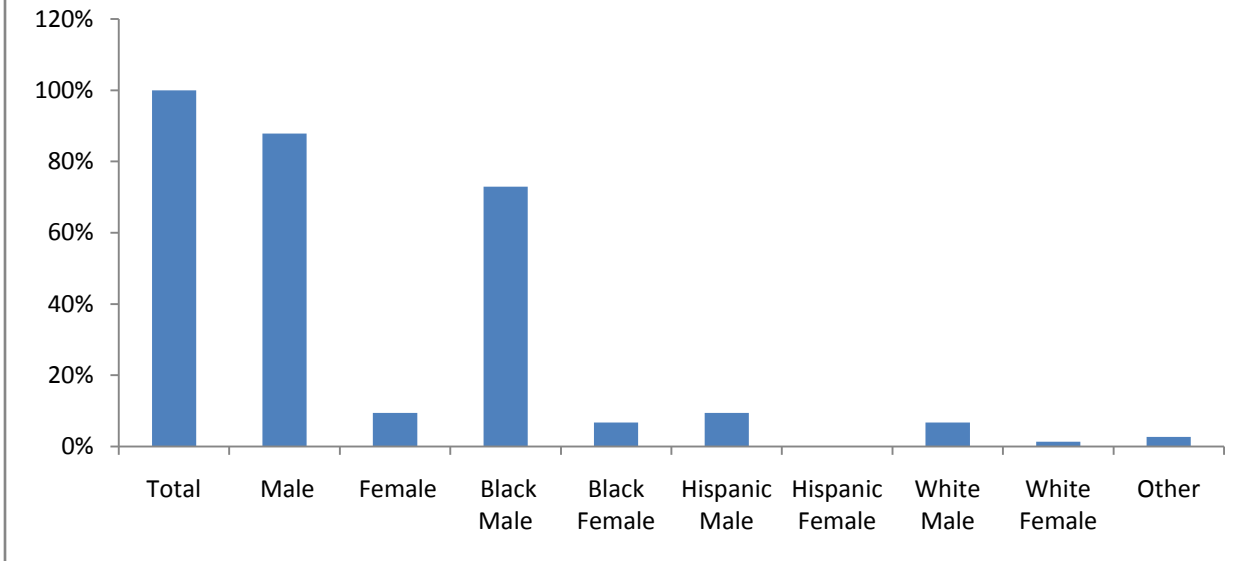
In 2006, the murder rate among black men in Boston was approximately 0.842 per 1,000, a higher per capita rate than the ten countries in the world with the highest murder rate in 2003, the last year for which such data is available (http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/crime_mur_percap-crime-murders-per-capita; <http://www.benbest.com/lifeext/murder.html>).¹ A black man in Boston has a higher risk of being murdered than people in some of the most impoverished nations of the world. Since 2005, there have been a total of 169 homicides in the City of Boston and 59 percent were in Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester (Police Districts B-2, B-3 and C-11). To underscore the severity of violence in the Black neighborhoods, in March 2007, Rev. Bruce Wall made an appeal to declare a ten-square-block area in Codman Square, Dorchester in a “state of emergency.” Other faith-based initiatives such as the Black Ministerial Alliance, Ten Point Coalition, the Ella J. Baker House, and the Global Ministries Christian Church have launched efforts to reduce violence, take back the streets, recruit volunteers to work with at-risk youths, and provide support and options to at-risk youths.



Source: Boston Police Department

¹ World crime data are derived from several sources including Seventh United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, covering the period 1998–2000 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Centre for International Crime Prevention), and the World Report on Violence and Health.

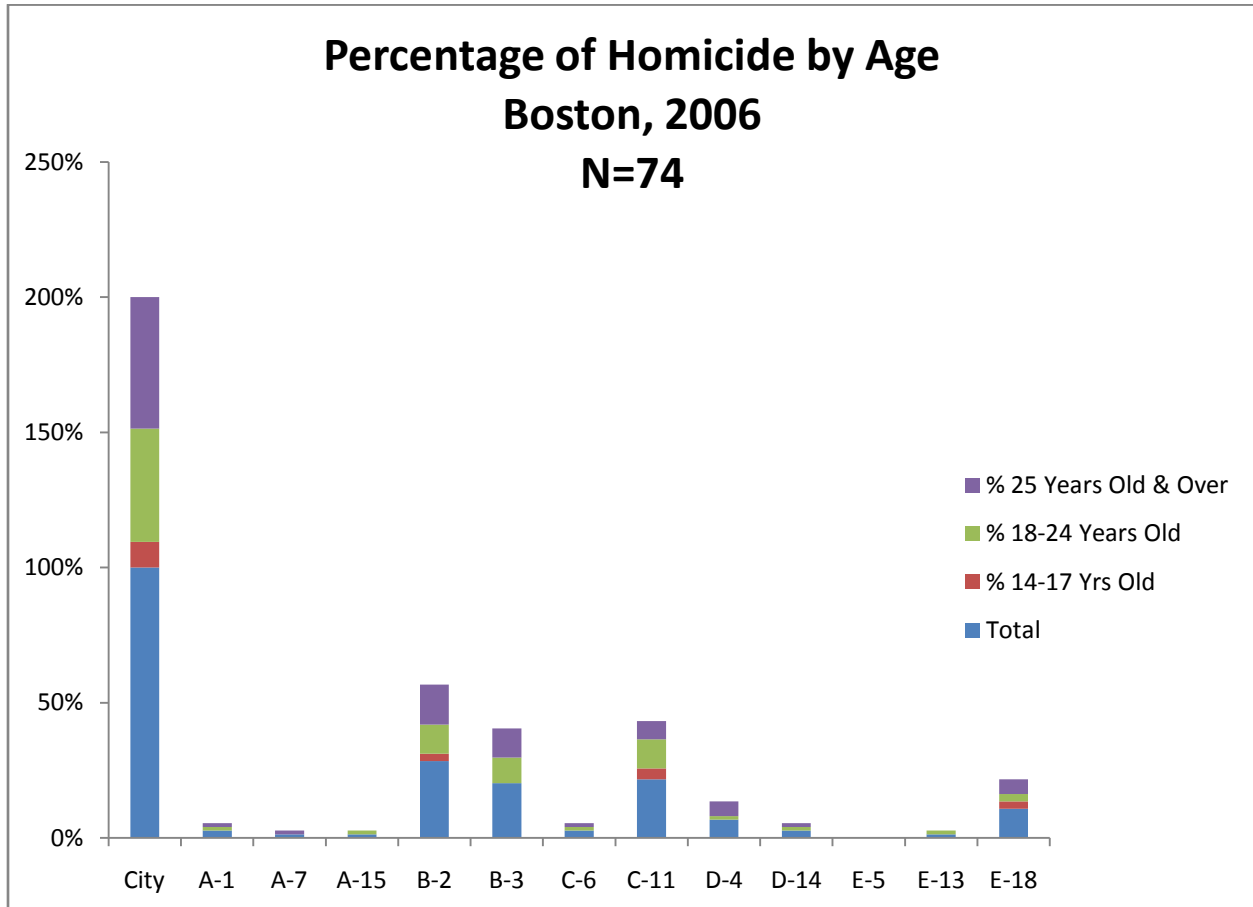
Percentage of Homicide By Race, Ethnicity and Gender Boston, 2006 N=74



Source: Boston Police Department

Violence in Boston has become synonymous with youth violence—violence both against youth and by youth. For instance, young murder victims represented more than half of the homicides in Boston in 2006. A total of 51 percent or 38 of the murder victims were young people under the age of 24. Seven youths between the ages of 14 and 17 were among the murder victims, while 31 were between 18 and 24 years of age. Prior to the roundtable, the Trotter Institute organized a meeting with a group of 15 youth from Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester in order to hear their perspectives on the wave of violence that is devastating the City and that particularly affects them. The meeting took place at Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation and the participants were from Teen Empowerment and the Dorchester Bay Youth Program. Many of the participants either had personal experiences with violence or knew other young victims of violence. One young woman lost a brother to youth violence and another had lost a cousin in February 2007. All of the participants felt strongly that adults have given up on them or that they are alone and have been abandoned. They explained that when they lost friends to violence, they turn to one another, and that they only trust each other. They stated that they are deeply affected when they lose a friend, sibling, or a close relative. The pain does not go away, the young woman who lost her brother explained. You simply learn to cope and live with it. They said that they have no place to go for support, and schools and adults do not understand them. Their general view is that the feeling of abandonment pushes them to seek revenge and to rely on each other. They basically said that a lot of the youth violence is due to revenge. Revenge is their way of evening the score. They see institutions such as law enforcement and schools as working against them instead of supporting them. They were extremely critical of the schools, which they said are not teaching them anything and of the teachers who are disengaged and basically do not

care. One of the young men was convinced that the schools do not want them. They were equally critical of the police who they felt played young people and neighborhoods against each other. As result, they are uncomfortable cooperating with the police. They are afraid that if they help the police or “snitch” they will not be protected, and thus suffer retaliation. Therefore, the participants argued, young people feel that they have to resolve their own issues and that triggers a cycle of violence and retaliation.



Source: Boston Police Department

Ultimately, the youths who participated at the meeting think that they and their peers in Boston have little more than the streets and their friends. They learn to survive in the street and they live and die by its rules. They were clear that the street has its own rules and it is often unforgiving. They were also concerned that violence follows them wherever they go, even in school. Traveling across neighborhoods for school can be dangerous. Many of them agreed, it is sometimes best to stay home because of the fights before, in, and after school, and at times that led to truancy. Two of the 15 youths admitted to having attendance problems in school. One of them has been out of school since January and the school would not let him back without a parent’s note. His understanding is that he will fail the marking period since he has more than three unexcused absences. He does not see the point of going back to school to fail. They also talked about joining street gangs both for support and protection. They all seemed to understand the importance of having at least a high school education in order to be moderately competitive in the job market and that unemployed and undereducated youths are more likely to be involved

in crime and with the criminal justice system. They all said that school is important and that they would like to graduate. They complained about the lack of engagement and support on the part of teachers and staff who do not seem to have any interest in their lives and futures.

Violent and Property Crimes

In addition to soaring homicide rates, Roxbury and Mattapan also had high violent and property crime rates in 2006. Two other Police Districts (A-1 and D-4) had violent and property crime rates higher than 10 percent of the City's total. A-1 and D-4 comprise downtown Boston, Chinatown, Fenway and Back Bay—the City's central business districts and the core of its retail activities. Data for A-1 also include Charlestown, which is District A-15. Violent and property crime is reported as Part I crime in accordance with the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting system. Misdemeanors and violations are reported as Part II crime (BPD 2006).² As of May 15, 2007, the Boston Police Department has released data for Part I crimes reported between January and July 16, 2006. A total of 15,964 violent and property crimes was reported in Boston during that period, and 32 percent was in Districts A-1 and D-4. District D-4 had 18 percent of the Part I crime reported in the City while A-1 had 14 percent. B-2 and C-11 were the only predominantly residential neighborhoods with high percentages of Part I crimes. Together, these two districts accounted for 26 percent or 4,151 of the total violent and property crime reported in Boston between January and June 2006.

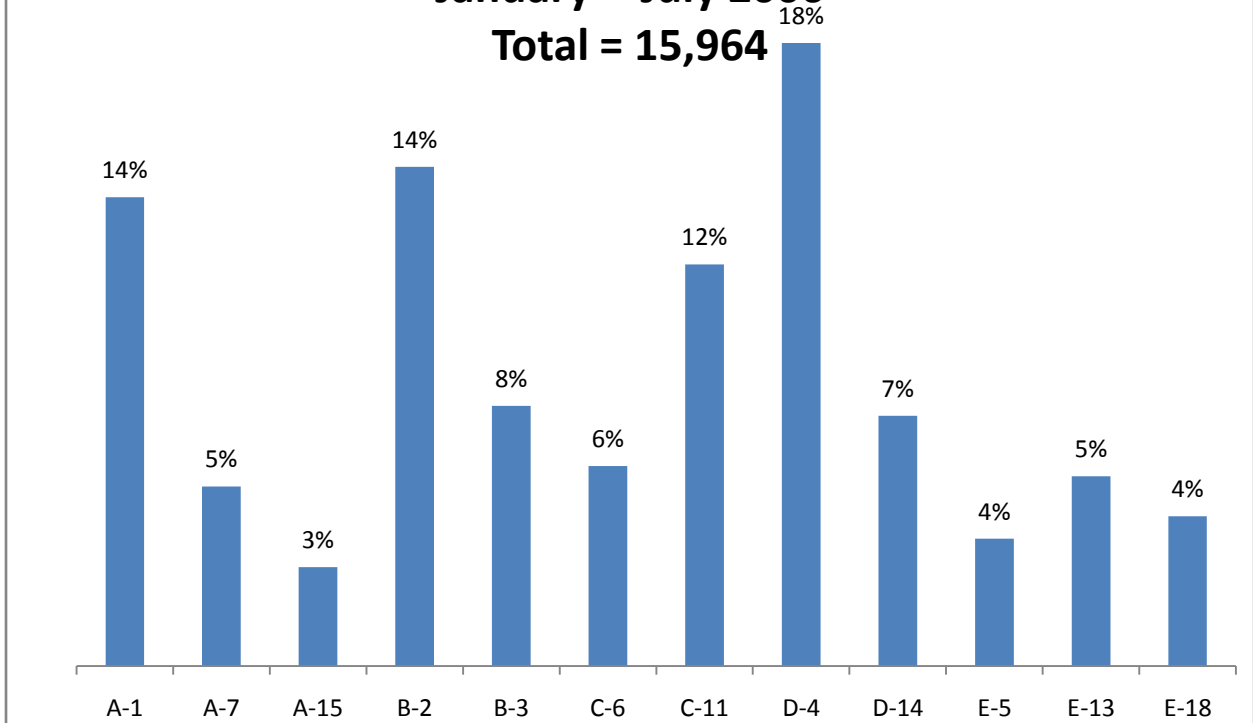
More than half (51 percent) of the Part I crimes reported in the City in 2006, excluding homicide, were larceny or attempted larceny followed by aggravated assault with 15 percent and robbery with 12 percent. Larceny represented 72 percent and 65 percent of the crimes reported in District A-1 and D-4, respectively. In fact, 78 percent and 74 percent of the crimes reported in Districts A-1 and D-4 were either larceny or burglary and attempted burglary. Aggravated assault and robbery constituted 15 percent and 16 percent of the crimes reported in District A-1 and D-4, respectively. On the other hand, 33 percent and 31 percent of the crime reported in Dorchester, and Roxbury were robbery, attempted robbery, or aggravated assaults. Only 8 percent of the total Part I crime reported in Boston in 2006 was in Mattapan. Aggravated assault and robbery, however, accounted for 39 percent of the crimes reported in that neighborhood. Crimes in the commercial centers were primarily against property, while a high proportion of the ones in Dorchester and Roxbury were against individuals. The high rate of aggravated assault and robbery contributes to the general concern about crime in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan.

² Part I crime includes homicide, rape and attempted rape, robbery and attempted robbery, aggravated assault, burglary and attempted burglary, larceny and attempted larceny, and vehicle theft and attempted vehicle theft. Part II crime includes other assaults, vandalism, weapon violations, prostitution, drug violations, driving while intoxicated (DWI), and disorderly conduct. Other Part II crime consists of forgery and counterfeiting, fraud, embezzlement, stolen property, sex offenses, gambling, offenses against family and children, violation of liquor laws, vagrancy, parking violations, violation of traffic/motor vehicle laws, and all other offenses.

Percentage of Reported Violent & Property Crime Boston

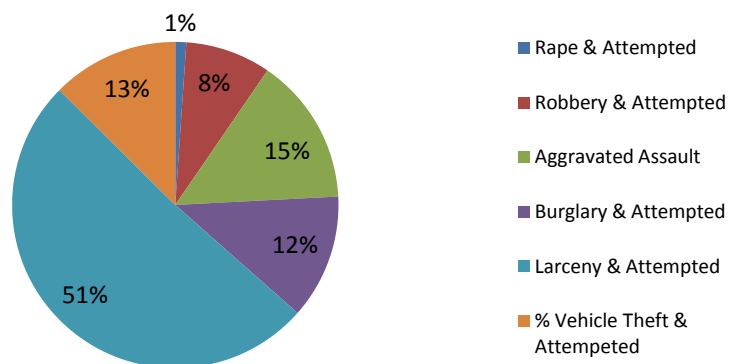
January -- July 2006

Total = 15,964



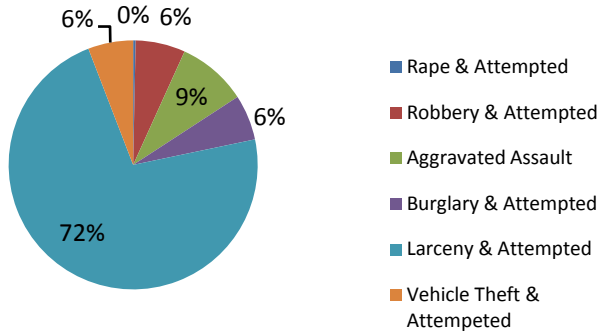
Source: Boston Police Department

Reported Part I Crime Boston, Jan-July 2006

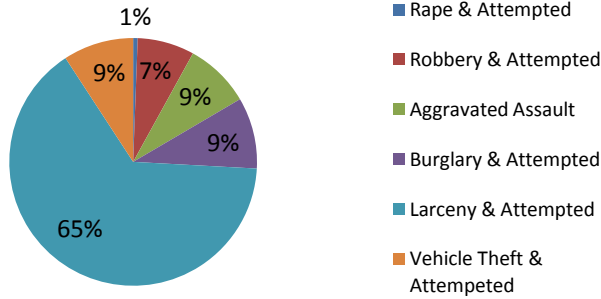


Source: Boston Police Department

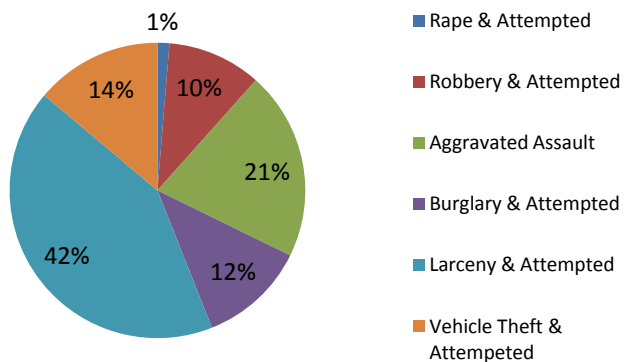
**Reported Part I Crime
District A-1, Jan -July 2006**

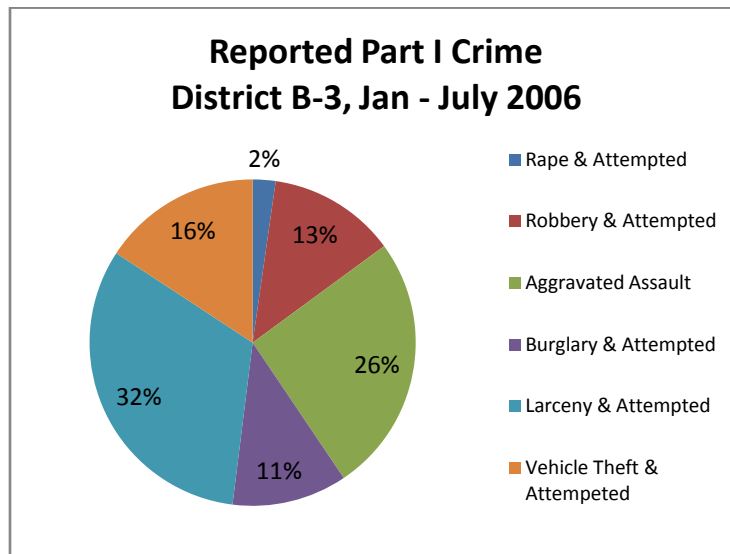
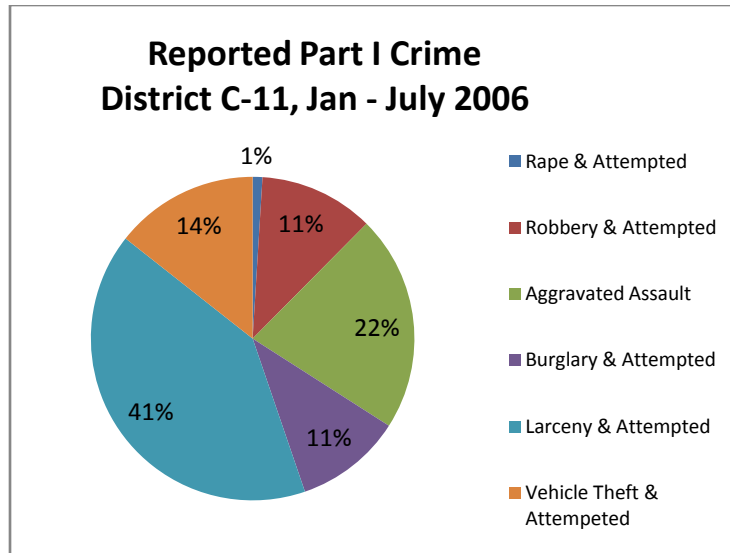


**Reported Part I Crime
District D-4, Jan--July 2006**



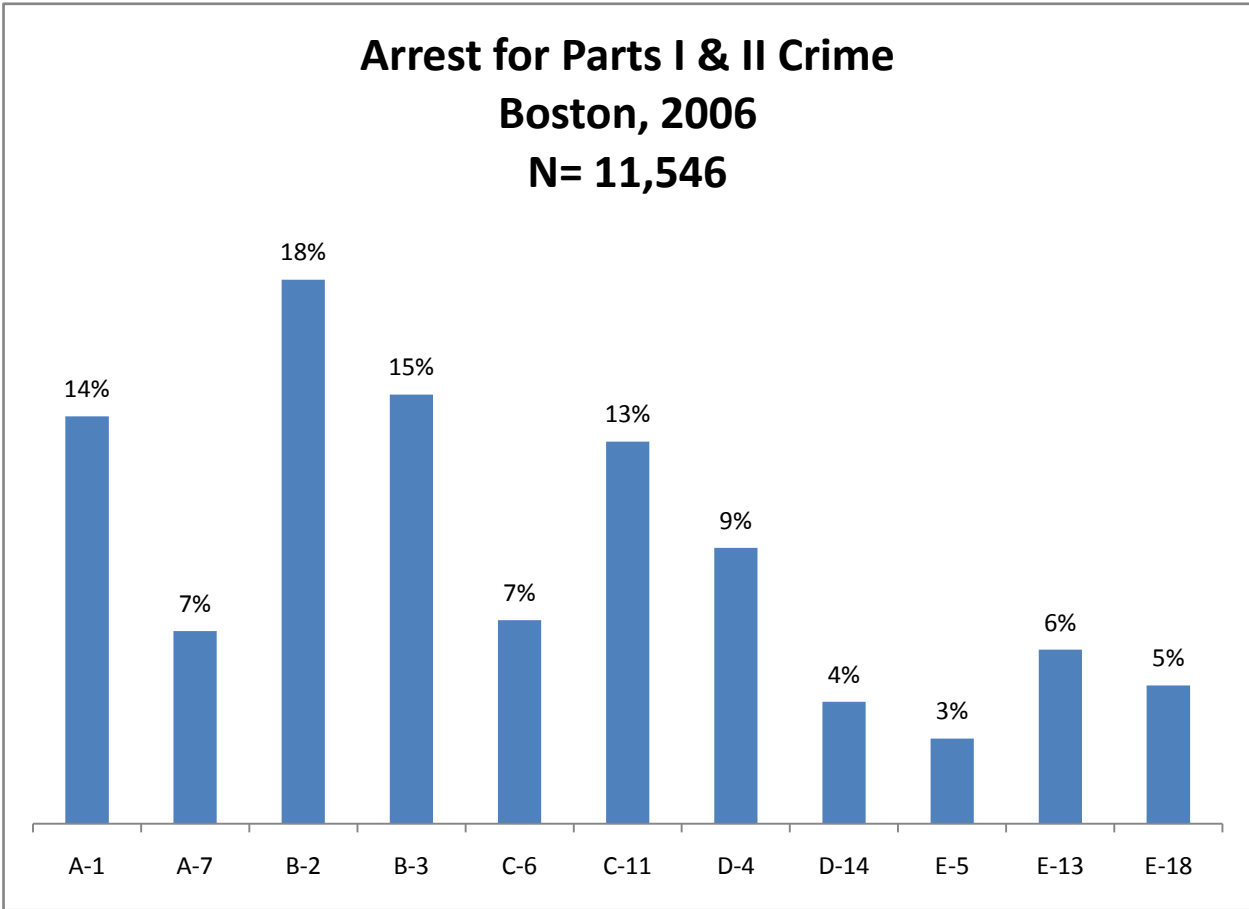
**Reported Part I Crime
District B-2, Jan-July 2006**





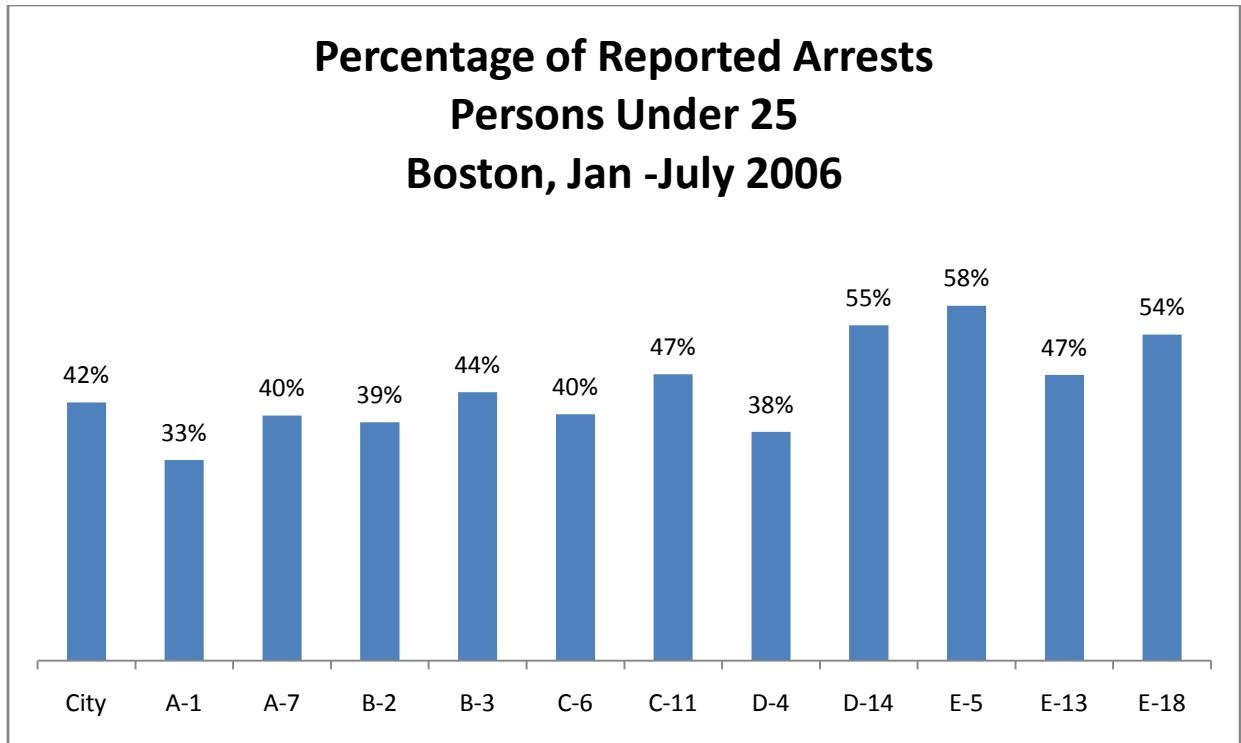
Reported Arrest

The Boston Police Department reported a total of 11,546 arrests between January and July 2006 for both Parts I and II crime. Arrests reported in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury surpassed all other residential neighborhoods in the City. Almost half (46 percent) of the total arrests reported were in those three neighborhoods or in Districts B-2, B-3, and C-11. District B-2 had the greatest share of arrests (18 percent) followed by B-3 with 15 percent. Only 4 percent of the total arrests were reported in District D-4, which had the highest Part I crime rate in Boston. As stated earlier, about eight out of ten crimes reported in D-4 were larceny or burglary. B-2, B-3 and C-11 had much higher violent crime rate than A-1 and D-4. Similar to the victims of violent crimes, 83 percent of the persons arrested were males. About 60 percent of all the persons arrested were black. Whites and Asians were 39 percent and 1 percent, respectively. Latinos of any race accounted for 22 percent of the arrests made in Boston between January and July 2006.



Source: Boston Police Department

Ages of arrest in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury follow a pattern similar to the rest of the City with the exception of Allston/Brighton, West Roxbury/Roslindale, and Hyde Park. Forty-two (42) percent of the 11,546 individuals arrested in Boston between January and July 2006 were under 25 years of age. A higher percentage of younger individuals were arrested in District E-5 (West Roxbury/Roslindale) and D-14 (Allston/Brighton). As the next chart shows, 39 percent of all persons arrested in Roxbury (B-2) were under 25 years of age. Mattapan and Dorchester had higher rates of young arrests, 44 percent and 47 percent, respectively, than the City. While 58 percent of the people arrested in E-5 were less than 25 years old, only 333 arrests were made in that District or 3 percent of the City's total. Allston/Brighton also had a low arrest rate (4%). In those two Districts, a total of 456 persons under 25 were arrested. Hyde Park's (E-18) overall arrest rate was 5 percent and the number of young people arrested was 289. On the other hand 2,273 young people were arrested in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury within a six-months period.



Source: Boston Police Department

Causes of Violence in Black Neighborhoods

The Roundtable participants started with a general discussion of the causes of violence in Boston's predominantly black neighborhoods. Dorchester's State Senator Jack Hart kicked off the discussion by stressing that Boston residents ought to be outraged by the recent wave of violence primarily affecting minority neighborhoods. Such high rates of violence, as described above, would not have been tolerated in nonminority neighborhoods. Senator Hart acknowledged that inner-city violence is now comparable to crime rates in some developing countries. People who migrate to the United States in order to escape violence in their home countries no longer feel safe in our city. City Councilor Chuck Turner and Stanley Pollack of Teen Empowerment concurred with Senator Hart.

Mr. Pollack stated that major policy changes are needed to quell the rate of violent crime in Boston. He said that we need to understand why violent crimes in Boston dropped significantly in the 1990s. He indicated that the Boston Foundation played a major role in supporting a shift to an asset-based approach when working with youth to combat crime. Millions of dollars were allotted to engaging youth as partners and stakeholders in the effort to reduce crime and it made a significant difference. Hundreds of youth were engaged as leaders at the state and local level.

A number of state and local policy changes and developments contributed to the increase in youth violence according to Mr. Polack.

1. In 2002, Governor Romney used his authority to cut all asset-based initiatives and all the youth leaders were let go from their positions.

2. Then, implementation of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) as a graduation standard led to an increase in the dropout rate resulting in large numbers of young people with nothing to do and therefore more likely to be involved in unproductive activities.
3. Schools are pressured by MCAS to produce results and to have high success rates. Students that fail the MCAS are viewed as enemies and are pushed out of school. Forcing out students who do not pass MCAS exacerbates the dropout problem.

In agreeing with Senator Hart, City Councilor Chuck Turner reiterated the need to be outraged without blaming only the victims and the criminals. We need to determine the appropriate state and federal responses. We must understand, he continued, that we cannot, as a society, keep on spending hundreds of billions of dollars for military activities abroad without hurting domestic programs or impacting our quality of life. We have to take responsibility for the fact that we allow our government to divert funds from domestic programs to support the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and that we are destroying this country in the process.

The war on drugs is the second major federal policy issue that Councilor Turner thinks is contributing to increased urban violence. Today, the war on drugs has nothing to do with drug treatment and prevention. It is effectively a punitive program designed to imprison young Black and Latino males. Drug-related offenses have caused a dramatic increase in the prison population in the United States as well as in the number of people who are released from prison after being convicted of drug-related felonies. Those ex-offenders have records with CORI or Criminal Offenders Record Information, which makes it difficult for them to find jobs and be fully reintegrated in the community. CORI, coupled with a general lack of entry level jobs that do not require a college degree, leads to a large group of people between the ages of 18 and 24 that are unemployed and therefore susceptible to illicit activities.

Furthermore, the war on drugs, according to Councilor Turner, has not resulted in a decrease in the supply of illegal drugs or drug activities in our cities and neighborhoods. On the contrary, an increased presence of drugs in our neighborhoods has contributed to a resurgence of gang activities. Roundtable participants agreed with Councilor Turner that Boston street gangs were dismantled in the 1990s. But today there is increased gang activities and gang-related crime in Boston. The Ella J. Baker House documented 42 street gangs in Dorchester alone. Councilor Turner reported that based on information from the Drug Unit of the Boston Police Department, as soon as a group of drug dealers is arrested, another group materializes. This is due in part to the continuous flow of drugs entering the community. For Councilor Turner, the following factors have led to the increase of violent crimes in the city and in our neighborhoods:

1. Redirection of federal resources to support military activities in the Middle East at the expense of domestic social programs.
2. The war on drugs, which has become a punitive and criminalizing mechanism affecting particularly black and Latino males instead of reducing the supply and the demand for drugs in cities and neighborhoods.

3. Reemergence of gang activities due partly to the increased flow of drugs in our cities and neighborhoods.
4. Unemployment among young people due partly to the lack of entry level jobs that do not require college degrees and barriers to employment among ex-offenders caused by CORI.

Robert Lewis, Jr., Executive Director of the Boston Centers for Youth and Families, pointed out that in the 1990s there were people on the streets not just the police, and the people who were on the streets were not afraid of our children, he said. He was recently at a meeting where a young person acted up and it required eight workers to deal with that young person. Finally, one individual took the young person into the rest room and said “I’ll reprimand if you do not stop.” The child’s response was “I’ll tell my mother.” He was a child, Mr. Lewis said, and somebody has to lead. It is difficult to lead when there is no organizational collaboration and the role of each organization is not clearly defined. The fact that there are about 3,200 nonprofit organizations in the city of Boston hinders collaboration and makes organizations less effective in addressing problems such as the increase in violent crime in neighborhoods of color. Mr. Lewis asked “why don’t we have collaborations?” Collaborations, he stated, would produce efficiency, savings, and better allocation of resources. He called for ways to centralize information, determine best practices, pool money and other resources to mobilize in a more effective manner to address the rise of violent crime.

Mr. Lewis further asked “what will happen to the information that is collected at the Crime Roundtable?” Similar meetings occurred in the past and more such meetings are likely to take place in the future. Are the information and the ideas to be shared? We cannot be effective unless we work collaboratively as nonprofit organizations to turn the neighborhood crime issue around. It can be done. We can be an effective force if we work together.

Here is a summary of the issues that the roundtable participants identified as the primary causes of the recent spate of violent crime in Boston’s predominantly black neighborhoods.

1. **Fewer police**—Since the 1990s there are about 300 fewer police on the streets.
2. **Lack of effective community policing**—Community policing does take place as it did in the 1990s when it incorporated diverse stakeholders and community actors. As a result, communities are less engaged with the police and are not involved in intervention.
3. **Budget cuts**—There is less state and federal funding to support youth development programs and activities.
4. **Lack of neighborhood and police collaboration**—A police officer stated that residents from high-crime neighborhoods are reluctant to provide information about crime or to testify in courts.
5. **Lack of youth involvement**—State and federal budget cuts have resulted in elimination of programs that actively engaged youths in crime prevention activities.

6. **Education policies that encourage dropout**—Some roundtable participants argued that MCAS increases the school dropout rate.
7. **School dropout rate**—About 1,500 students from the Boston public schools drop out every year³. They are not tracked and there are no data about their activities after they dropped out of school. Black males between the ages of 18 and 24 without a high school diploma are twice as likely to be incarcerated as Black males of the same ages who have a high school diploma and six times more likely than those with a college education⁴.
8. **Lack of entry level jobs/youth unemployment**—There is a lack of entry level jobs that do not require college education according to the roundtable participants. Based on 2005 American Community Survey, the unemployment rate among Bostonians ages 16 to 24 was about 16 percent while the overall rate for the population 16 years and over was 9.1 percent.
9. **Barriers to employment caused by Criminal Offenders Record Information (CORI)**—It is difficult for ex-offenders to enter the job market due to CORI regulations. Inability to re-integrate ex-offenders into normal life contributes to recidivism and more criminal activities.
10. **Flow of drugs**—Illegal drugs in the city and in the neighborhoods lead to increased gang activities.
11. **Increase in drug-related offences without sufficient prevention and treatment programs.**
12. **Reemergence of gangs**—There are presently more than 40 street gangs in Dorchester alone. Many violent crimes are gang-related.
13. **Inadequate community leadership**—Too many organizations address the same issues independently without adequate collaboration.
14. **Inadequate community responses**—There is no sense of urgency and outrage in the black community regarding the high level of violence crime.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Hyde Park-Roslindale City Councilor Rob Consalvo led off the discussion on specific courses of action to address the wave of violent crimes plaguing our neighborhoods. He proposed the following:

³ See *Too Big to be Seen: The Invisible Dropout Crisis in Boston and America*, A Report of the Boston Youth Transitions Task Force (Boston, 2006).

⁴ See *The Education Attainment of the Nation's Young Black Men and Their Recent Labor Market Experiences: What Can Be Done to Improve Their Future Labor Market and Education Prospects* (Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston, Feb. 2007).

1. **Focus the City’s budget on youth programs and prevention**—He explained that in 2006, an allocation of \$18 million resulted in a 10 percent increase in summer jobs. During that five-week period, July through August, no homicides were reported in the city. This hints at a direct relationship between youth violence and access to jobs.
2. **Increase funding to organizations serving youth and families**—Organizations and agencies that serve youth and families must receive sufficient funding to restore physical facilities and run programs effectively.
3. **Increase police presence on the street**—More police on the streets means individuals feel safer.
4. **Collaborative efforts**—The network of community crimewatch entities should be strengthened and encouraged. There is a need for more collaboration among the many crime prevention and intervention organizations and agencies.
5. **Sharing of information**—Neighborhoods and organizations need to share information about effective crime watch systems.
6. **Improve existing information technology**—Some existing emergency reporting services are outdated. For instance, the city 911 service is not accessible via cell phone. That needs to change.

In addition to Councilor Consalvo’s propositions, the roundtable participants offered the following recommendations:

- **Engaging youth as productive and viable leaders**—Past experiences show that when youths are positively engaged they can play a critical role in crime reduction and prevention efforts. Roundtable participants strongly recommend that youth be viewed as partners and not foes.
- **Reinstating the asset-based approach**—Stanley Pollack, of Teen Empowerment, argued that the asset-based approach funded by the Boston Foundation was a decisive strategy in the 1990s. It valorized the youth and provided a framework in which they could play a role and contribute to the improvement of their neighborhoods.
- **Supporting collaborative crime reduction and prevention efforts**—Lack of collaboration among organizations with similar missions led to inefficient use of resources and leadership.
- **Community policing**—Reestablish a working relationship between police and neighborhoods through activities that reinforce mutual respect and trust. Simply increasing police presence in neighborhoods is not enough.
- **Involving schools in prevention and public safety strategies**—Educational policies directly or indirectly affect youth violence. Youths who stay in school and graduate from

high schools are less likely to be involved in criminal activities. It is important to focus on how to keep kids in school and for schools to have a better understanding of the students' environments.

- **Eliminate barriers to youth employment**—CORI is seen a major impediment to youth employment. CORI reform and youth development funding are two areas that the roundtable participants identified that can help eliminate barriers to youth employment.
- **Reexamination of drug sentencing**—Drug policies tend to impose harsh sentences for even minor offences.

In conclusion, State Senator Diane Wilkerson stated that a research institute such as the Trotter Institute can play an important role in sustaining a long-term dialogue and analysis regarding crime and violence in our neighborhoods. The ability to collect, analyze, and disseminate data is invaluable to policymakers. Research can help policymakers to make budget decisions and determine how to allocate resources. Senator Wilkerson stated that while funds for certain services and programs have decreased, the state budget increased from \$11 billion when she was first elected in 1993 to \$26.7 billion for fiscal year 2008, which means that state has \$15 billion more to allocate. She stressed the importance of having the right information and backup data to direct state budget appropriations in ways that will help resolve community issues such crime and youth violence. This is perhaps a role that the Trotter Institute can play. Governments allocate resources based on established and proven needs and respond to identifiable issues.

Acknowledging the fact that people participated in the roundtable discussion because of their interest and concern, Senator Wilkerson urged the group to think about next steps and to consider the following:

- Research and sustain and translate what people are seeing and experiencing.
- Community leaders must take responsibility and start to collaborate and communicate more with each other.
- Collect appropriate data, document what is needed, and recommend the course of action.
- Continue conversations about community conduct and policies regarding young people particularly school suspensions and CORI.
- Research to better understand CORI and school regulations.
- Assume responsibility, as adults, for thoughts, conversations, and actions that foster an unsafe environment that then causes violence in our personal and professional lives and in the lives of our children. This is an adult issue. Children are not responsible for the state of our neighborhoods and community. Adults are responsible