PURPOSE:
To use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and geographic analyses to identify underserved populations and examine gaps between the victims served by the Cleveland County Sheriff Office (CCSO) Victim Services Program and the population of violent crime victims in the general population of Cleveland County.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
#1: In which regions in the CCSO jurisdiction area of Cleveland County are there especially high rates of violent crime, as reported in law enforcement incident reports?
#2: In which regions in the CCSO jurisdiction area of Cleveland County are there especially high rates of violent crime, but residents are not accessing the CCSO Victim Services program at correspondingly high rates (as reflected in the location of the incident, and not their residential address)?
#3: What are the demographic profiles of the identified high-risk, underserved regions of Cleveland County?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
- The CCSO Victim Services program was established in January 2020.
- The program employs two Victim Specialists, one full-time and one part-time.
- In 2020, 170 victims were referred to the CCSO Victim Services Program, and 91 of these victims received services.
- Thus, only 17% of the total 546 victims in Cleveland County who were eligible for services were served, indicating a need to sustain and expand the program.

DATA SOURCES USED:
- 2020 calendar year crime data from CCSO & the Shelby and Kings Mountain Police Depts.
- Data on victims served by the CCSO Victims Services program during the 2020 calendar year
- Mapping & demographic data for block groups from ESRI Census datasets (2020)
- Block groups (containing between 600 – 3,000 people) are the smallest geographic entity used to tabulate the decennial census.
Identifying High-Risk, Underserved Victim Populations in Cleveland County, NC, Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Geographic Analyses

**Major Findings:**
Currently in its second year of operations, the CCSO Victim Services program is building its program while also providing services to a significant number of victims in Cleveland County. The program received 170 referrals and served 91 clients in its first year (2020), and for the first half of 2021 (i.e., January 1, 2021, through June 30, 2021), the program received 167 referrals and served 95 clients. Considering that the program is staffed by only 1.5 full-time Victim Specialists, this is a large number of clients served by a relatively small program.

The findings of this study indicate a need to continue to sustain - and likely expand - the CCSO Victim Services program. The results of this project identified areas in Cleveland County in which residents face an elevated risk of experiencing crime, and yet they access the Victim Services program at lower rates. This map depicts areas in Cleveland County in which victims seek support from the program at higher (i.e., in darker green) and lower (i.e., in lighter green) rates.

**Next Steps:**
- Future research can identify how the CCSO Victim Services program benefits clients, as well as impacts prosecution rates for offenders of victims served by the program.
- Demographic profiles of currently under-served regions in Cleveland County can inform future outreach efforts. Institutions (e.g., schools, religious institutions, and libraries) in those areas can be potential partners in regional outreach.

**For More Information:**
- For more information about this research, please contact Christine Murray at cemurray@uncg.edu.
- For more information about the CCSO Victim Services program, please contact Andrea Marshall at andrea.marshall@clevelandcountync.gov.
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