

Homicidal Encounters
A Study of Homicide in Australia
1989–1999

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Jenny Mouzos



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Foreword

Through its National Homicide Monitoring Program, the Australian Institute of Criminology has collected data on every homicide in Australia since 1989, including incident, victim, offender, and victim–offender characteristics. This unique data set makes it possible for the Institute to conduct in-depth analyses of various aspects of homicide.

This report focuses on an extensive examination of a decade of homicide in Australia. It provides a statistical overview of the four essential components of homicide—incident, victim, offender, and victim–offender relationships, and it examines the occurrence of homicide in the course of other crime, as well as mass and serial murder. The report then proceeds to examine in depth some of the homicidal encounters experienced in Australia. This includes homicide between intimate partners, women and children who kill, and children and the elderly as victims of homicide. Throughout the substantive chapters, case narratives are included which further assist our understanding of the different subsets of homicide in Australia.

The rate of homicide victimisation has remained relatively stable during the ten years under review. Males accounted for over 60 per cent of victims and over 80 per cent of offenders. On the other hand, females were more likely to be become victims of homicide (37% of victims) than actually perpetrate lethal violence (13% of offenders). The rate of firearm-related homicide has also exhibited a declining trend in recent years.

This report is a significant contribution to the literature on homicide, and compares favourably with such works as the Canadian study of homicide “Deadly Deeds” by Silverman and Kennedy (1993) and the analysis undertaken by Wallace (1986) “Homicide: The Social Reality” in dealing with homicide in New South Wales.

Adam Graycar

June 2000

Director, Australian Institute of Criminology

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Contents

Foreword	v
Acknowledgments	vi
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xi
Abbreviations	xviii
Executive Summary	xix
Introduction	1
Previous Research	2
Present Study	3
The National Homicide Monitoring Program	4
Quality Control of Data	6
Other Sources of Statistics on Homicide	7
Definition of Homicide	8
Homicide Trends in the Twentieth Century	9
Homicide in Australia: A Brief Overview	15
Incident Characteristics	15
Long-Term Trends	15
Jurisdictional Trends	17
Incident Location	19
Geographical Distribution	21
Time of Incident	21
Day of the Week	21
Month of the Year	23
Multiple Victim and Multiple Offender Incidents	24
Gang-Related Incidents	25
Illicit Drug Involvement	27
Ten-Year Summary—Incident Profile	28
Victim Characteristics	29
Trends in Victimization	29
Jurisdictional Trends	30
Gender and Age	30
Racial Appearance	34
Marital Status	37
Employment Status	39
Type of Weapon Used to Kill the Victim	41

Alleged Motive of the Killing	44
Alcohol and/or Illicit/Prescription Drug Usage	47
Ten-Year Summary—Victim Profile	50
Offender Characteristics	51
Trends in Offending	51
Gender and Age	51
Racial Appearance	55
Marital Status	57
Employment Status	57
Injury or Death of the Offender	60
Alcohol and/or Illicit/Prescription Drug Usage	61
Ten-Year Summary—Offender Profile	63
Victim–Offender Relationships	64
Types of Victim–Offender Relationships	64
Trends in Victim–Offender Relationships	67
Jurisdictional Comparisons	67
Ten-Year Summary—Victim–Offender Relationship Profile	69
Homicide in the Course of Other Crime	71
Homicide in the Course of Robbery	73
Nature of Robbery-Homicide	76
Homicide in the Course of Sexual Assault	77
The Nature of Sexual Assault followed by Homicide	79
Summary—Homicide in the Course of Other Crime	81
Mass and Serial Murders in Australia	83
Mass Murders	83
A Typology of Mass Murder in Australia	87
Serial Murders	91
Typology of Serial Murder	93
Serial Murder in Australia	94
Common threads	95
Summary—Mass and Serial Murders in Australia	99
Homicidal Encounters	101
Males Killing Males—Scenarios of Masculine Violence	103
Trends in Male-to-Male Homicide	103
Circumstances and Characteristics of Masculine Homicide	103
Location of Male-on-Male Killings	105
Alleged Motive	105
Use of Alcohol	107
Employment/Marital Status	107
Scenarios of Masculine Homicide	108

Confrontational Homicides	109
Homicide as a Form of Conflict Resolution	111
Summary—Males Killing Males: Scenarios of Masculine Violence	114
Homicidal Intimates	115
Trends in Intimate Partner Homicide	115
Arguments of a Lethal Nature—What are they about?	117
History of Domestic Violence	118
Summary—Homicidal Intimates	124
Homicidal Women	125
Trends in Offending	125
Location of Incident	126
Choice of Weapon	126
Why do Women Kill?	126
Whom do Women Kill?	127
Trends in Victim—Female Offender Relationships	129
Scenarios of Women who Kill	130
Summary—Homicidal Women	131
The Killing of Children	132
Trends in Child Homicide	133
Gender and Age	135
Circumstances and Characteristics of Child Homicide	135
Weapon	135
Motive	136
History of Child Abuse	138
Who Kills Children?	140
Murder-Suicide	143
Summary—The Killing of Children	144
Homicidal Children	145
Age of Criminal Responsibility	145
Trends in Children Who Kill	147
Gender of Child Homicide Offenders	147
Child Offenders: International Comparison	148
Incident Details	149
Victim Details	150
Why do Children Kill?	151
Victim–Offender Relationships—Who do Children Kill?	153
Summary—Homicidal Children	154
Elderly Homicide	155
Trends in the Victimization of the Elderly	156
Circumstances and Characteristics of Elderly Homicide	158

Location of Elderly Homicide	159
Weapon Used to Kill Elderly Victims	159
Elderly Homicide in the Course of Other Crime	160
The Offender of Elderly Homicide	161
Alleged Motive of the Offender	164
Scenarios of Elderly Homicide	164
Summary—Elderly Victims of Homicide	165
Concluding Discussion: Preventing Homicidal Encounters— Directions for the New Millennium	167
Preventing Males Killing Males	168
Reducing Violence in Licensed Venues	169
Reducing Pub Hopping and Related Violence	171
Closed Circuit Television	172
Improved Street Lighting	173
Preventing Intimate Partner Homicide—Victimisation and Offending	173
Primary Prevention—Public Awareness and Community Education Campaigns	174
Secondary Prevention—Preventing Re-Victimisation	175
Tertiary—Prevention: Perpetrator Programs	177
Alcohol Abuse	178
Declining Trend: A Positive Outlook	179
Preventing Child Homicide	179
Primary Prevention—Supporting Families	180
Secondary Prevention—Home Visitation Programs	182
Tertiary Prevention—Learning from Lethal Outcomes	183
Child Death Review Teams	185
Preventing Elderly Homicide	187
Preventing Elderly Homicide in the Course of Other Crime	187
Target Hardening	188
Personal Alarm Systems	190
Preventing Elderly Homicide Victimisation from Family and Friends	191
Preventing Children Killing	193
Home Environment—The Role of Parents	194
Educating Young People	195
Employment/Recreational Facilities	197
Concluding Comments	198
References	199
Appendix 1:	
List of National Homicide Monitoring Program Publications	219

List of Tables

Table 1:	AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: Distribution of Homicide Incidents by Jurisdiction	17
Table 2:	AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Population, by Gender	31
Table 3:	AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Rates per 100,000 Relevant Population, Gender and Age Group	32
Table 4:	AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1998–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization According to Gender and Marital Status (n = 306)	38
Table 5:	AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Victim–Offender Relationship Types by Jurisdiction (n = 3,685)	68
Table 6:	AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Mass-Murder Incidents with Four or More Victims per Year	86
Table 7:	AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Mass Murders According to Motivation of Offender (n = 13)	89
Table 8:	AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Mass-Murder Victims by Victim–Offender Relationship	90
Table 9:	AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: Age of Criminal Responsibility and Definition of Juvenile	145
Table 10:	AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Gender-Age Distribution of Elderly Victims of Homicide (n = 236)	158

List of Figures

Figure 1:	AUSTRALIA, Trends in Homicide 1915–1998: Rate per 100,000 Population	9
Figure 2:	International Trends in Homicide 1972–1998	11
Figure 3:	Comparison of Homicide Rates in Four Countries, 1974–1998 All Homicides	12
Figure 4:	Comparison of Homicide Rates in Four Countries, 1974–1998 Excluding Homicides by Firearm	12
Figure 5:	International Homicide 1990–1996: Completed Offences per 100,000 Population	14
Figure 6:	AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Homicide Incidents per Year (n = 3,150)	16
Figure 7:	AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: Distribution of Homicide Incidents per Year, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999 (n = 3,150)	18

Figure 8: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Location (n = 3,150)	18
Figure 9: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Location and Year (n = 3,150)	19
Figure 10: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Location and Jurisdiction, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999 (n = 3,150)	20
Figure 11: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Time of the Day of Occurrence (n = 2,900)	22
Figure 12: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Day of the Week of Occurrence (n = 3,109)	22
Figure 13: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Month of Occurrence (n = 3,126)	23
Figure 14: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Homicide Incidents According to Month of Occurrence per Year (n = 3,126)	23
Figure 15: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to the Number of Victims and Offenders (n = 2,803)	24
Figure 16: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Incidents with Multiple Victims (n = 150) as a Percentage of Total Homicide Incidents (n = 3,150)	25
Figure 17: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Multiple Victim Homicide Incidents (n = 150) as a Percentage of all Homicide Incidents, Per Jurisdiction (n = 3,150)	26
Figure 18: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Population	29
Figure 19: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Population	30
Figure 20: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Victims According to Gender (n = 3,380)	31
Figure 21: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Relevant Population, by Gender and Age Group	32
Figure 22: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Victims According to Gender of Offenders	34

Figure 23: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Racial Appearance (n = 3,271)	35
Figure 24: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Victims by Racial Appearance (n = 3,277)	35
Figure 25: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999, Distribution of Homicide Victims by Racial Appearance and Jurisdiction (n = 3,277)	36
Figure 26: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Marital Status (n = 2,893)	37
Figure 27: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Marital Status (n = 2,893)	38
Figure 28: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Employment Status (n = 2,431)	40
Figure 29: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Employment Status (n = 2,431)	40
Figure 30: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Victims by Type of Weapon and Gender (n = 3,156)	41
Figure 31: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Victims by Type of Weapon (n = 3,162)	42
Figure 32: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Firearm Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Population	43
Figure 33: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victims Killed by a Firearm (n = 808), as a Percentage of All Homicides (n = 3,386)	43
Figure 34: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Victims Killed with a Firearm by Jurisdiction	44
Figure 35: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Alleged Motive (n = 2,427)	46
Figure 36: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Alleged Motive (n = 3,207)	46
Figure 37: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1996–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Alcohol and Illicit/Prescription Drug Usage (n = 970)	48

Figure 38: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1996–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Alcohol and Illicit/ Prescription Drug Usage (Total Victims = 970)	49
Figure 39: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender (n = 3,404)	52
Figure 40: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Offending Rates per 100,000 Relevant Population, by Gender and Age Group	52
Figure 41: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Racial Appearance (n = 3,260)	54
Figure 42: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Racial Appearance (n = 3,260)	54
Figure 43: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Racial Appearance and Jurisdiction	56
Figure 44: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Marital Status (n = 3,139)	56
Figure 45: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Marital Status (n = 3,139)	58
Figure 46: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Employment Status (n = 2,926)	58
Figure 47: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Employment Status (n = 2,942)	59
Figure 48: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Whether they Committed Suicide (n = 3,404)	60
Figure 49: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1996–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Alcohol and/or Illicit Prescription Drug Usage (n = 985)	62
Figure 50: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Relationship between the Victim and the Offender (n = 3,681)	66
Figure 51: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Trends in Victim–Offender Relationships	66

Figure 52: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Incidents Occurring in the Course of Other Crime (n = 412) as a Percentage of all Homicide Incidents (n = 3,150)	72
Figure 53: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Incidents Occurring in the Course of Other Crime (n = 412)	72
Figure 54: AUSTRALIA, 1993–1998: Number of Armed Robberies by Type of Weapon Used	74
Figure 55: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Incidents that Occurred in the Commission of Robbery (n = 277) as a Percentage of All Homicide Incidents (n = 3,150)	74
Figure 56: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Incidents that Occurred in the Commission of Robbery (n = 277)	75
Figure 57: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Incidents that Occurred in the Commission of Sexual Assault (n = 117) as a Percentage of All Homicide Incidents (n = 3,150)	78
Figure 58: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Incidents that Occurred in the Commission of Sexual Assault (n = 117)	78
Figure 59: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Mass-Murder Victims by Jurisdiction (n = 94)	86
Figure 60: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Type of Weapon Used by Mass Murderers (n = 13)	91
Figure 61: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents per Year (n = 1,390)	102
Figure 62: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents (n = 1,390) as a Percentage of all Homicide Incidents	102
Figure 63: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents According to Victim–Offender Relationship (n = 1,390)	104
Figure 64: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents that occurred between Friends/ Acquaintances or Strangers, According to Location of Incident (n = 892)	104

Figure 65: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents that occurred between Friends/ Acquaintances or Strangers, According to Alleged Motive of Offender (n = 892)	106
Figure 66: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents that occurred between Friends/ Acquaintances or Strangers, According to Whether Alcohol was Consumed (n = 892)	106
Figure 67: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Gender of Offender–Victim in Intimate Partner Homicides (n = 759)	116
Figure 68: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1996–30 June 1999: Proportion of Intimate Partner Homicides (n = 170) by Whether there was a Prior History of Domestic Violence	119
Figure 69: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Relationship between the Victim and Female Offender (n = 453)	128
Figure 70: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Trends in Victim–Female Offender Relationships (n = 453)	128
Figure 71: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Child Homicide Victims (n = 316)	134
Figure 72: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Child Homicide, Victimization Rates per 100,000 Relevant Population, by Gender and Age Group (n = 316)	134
Figure 73: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Child Homicide, Distribution of Victims according to Alleged Motive (n = 140)	137
Figure 74: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Parents who Killed their Children by Gender and Whether they are Biological/Non-biological Parents of the Victim (n = 196)	142
Figure 75: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Parents who Killed their Children According to Whether they are Biological/Non-biological Parents of the Victim and the Age of the Child (n = 196)	142
Figure 76: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Child Homicide Offenders and the Number of Victims that they Killed	146
Figure 77: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Child Homicide Offenders According to Gender (n = 169)	146
Figure 78: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number and Percentage of Child Homicide Offenders According to Age (n = 169)	148

Figure 79: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Incidents Committed by Child Homicide Offenders According to Location (n = 126)	149
Figure 80: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Child Homicide Offenders: Victim–Offender Relationships (n = 174)	153
Figure 81: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Proportion of Homicide Victims that Were Aged 65 Years and Over (n = 236)	157
Figure 82: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Proportion of All Homicide Incidents and Elderly Homicide Incidents Occurring in the Course of Other Crime	160
Figure 83: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Elderly Victim–Offender Relationship (n = 238)	162
Figure 84: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Elderly Victim–Offender Relationship According to Location (n = 238)	162

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AVO	Apprehended Violence Order
CBD	Central Business District
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CIB	Central Intelligence Bureau
CIRG	Critical Incident Response Group
CLASP	Community Liaison Advisory Safety Project
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DoCS	Department of Community Services
DREIM	Drug Relationships in Murder Project
DVHP	Domestic Violence Homicide Project
DVO	Domestic Violence Order
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
MO	Modus Operandi
NCP	National Crime Prevention
NHMP	National Homicide Monitoring Program
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
PAVE	Partnerships Against Violence Everywhere
QLD	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SIDS	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
TUFF	Together for Under Fives and Families
UCR	Uniform Crime Reports
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WHISE	Women's Health in the South East
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive Summary

During the period from 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999, homicide in Australia was characterised by the following features:

Incident Profile

- There were 3150 homicide incidents.
- The incidence of homicide in Australia has remained relatively stable, with an average of 315 incidents per year.
- Just under two-thirds of all homicide incidents (60.2%) occurred in residential premises.
- Over two-thirds of homicide incidents occurred between 6pm and 6am.
- Nearly half of all homicide incidents occurred on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday.
- Homicide incidents were least likely to occur between 6am and before noon.
- Eight out of 10 homicide incidents can be characterised as “one-on-one” interactions between the victim and the offender.
- On average, there are 15 multiple fatality incidents per year, resulting in approximately 39 victims.

Victim Profile

- There were 3386 victims of homicide—63.2 per cent were male and 36.8 per cent were female.
- Across the 10-year period under review, rates of victimisation have remained relatively constant fluctuating between 1.7 and 2.0 per 100,000 population.
- Females were killed at an average annual rate of 1.4, whereas males were killed at an average annual rate of 2.4 per 100,000 population.

- There has been a stable pattern of gender differentiation, with a ratio of 3 males killed for every 2 females.
- The highest age-specific victimisation rate for females was for children less than one year of age (average rate of 2.6), whereas the highest victimisation rate for males was for young men between the ages of 24 and 26 years (average rate of 4.3).
- Indigenous persons were on average 8.1 times more likely to be victims of homicide than non-Indigenous persons.
- Male victims were more likely to have been single at the time of the incident, whereas female victims were more likely to have been married or living in a defacto relationship.
- Both male and female victims were more likely to be not working at the time of the incident.
- Victims of homicide were more likely to be killed with a knife or other sharp instrument than any other weapon.
- There was a declining trend in the proportion of victims killed with a firearm, with an average of 81 victims killed per year with a firearm.
- Females were more likely to be killed as a result of a domestic altercation, although this proportion has declined in recent years.
- Males were more likely to be killed following an alcohol-related argument.
- Between 1996/97 and 1998/99, almost 2 out of 3 female victims and 2 out of 4 male victims were not under the influence of alcohol or illicit/prescription drugs at the time of the incident.

Offender Profile

- There were 3481 offenders of homicide—87.2 per cent were male and 12.8 per cent were female.
- Males consistently exhibited higher rates of offending than females, with a ratio of about 7:1.
- The median age of male offenders was 27 years and the median age for female offenders was 29 years.

- Male offenders were more likely to be single, whereas female offenders were more likely to be married or living in a defacto relationship at the time of the incident.
- Just over 7 out of 10 male offenders and just under 9 out of 10 female offenders were not employed at the time of the incident.
- Approximately 6 per cent of homicide offenders in Australia committed suicide during or following the homicide incident.
- Between 1996/97 and 1998/99, just under 2 out of 5 male offenders and just over 1 out of 5 female offenders were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident.

Victim–Offender Relationship Profile

- Eight out of 10 homicides occurred between people who were known to one another.
- Females were more likely to be killed by an intimate partner, whereas males were more likely to be killed by a friend or acquaintance.
- Just under 2 out of 10 homicides occurred between strangers.

Homicide in the Course of Other Crime

- Approximately 13 per cent of all homicide incidents occur in the course of other crime, such as robbery and sexual assault.
- One in 10 homicide incidents occurred in the course of robbery.
- Only 3.7 per cent of all homicide incidents occurred in the course of sexual assault.

Mass and Serial Murder

- In Australia, between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, there were 13 mass-murder incidents (where the number of victims was 4 or more), resulting in the death of 94 persons.

- In the two most recent years, 1997/98 and 1998/99, Australia recorded no mass-murder incidents.
- Just over 8 out of 10 mass murderers were motivated by the “need for revenge”.
- Just under 3 out of 5 mass murders were committed with a firearm.
- In Australia, since 1960 there have been 9 known serial killers, of which 3 were active between 1989/90 and 1998/99 and are recorded in the National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP).

Males Killing Males

- Male-on-male homicide incidents accounted for approximately 50 per cent of all homicide incidents (where an offender was identified).
- Male-on-male homicide incidents in Australia are most likely to occur between friends/acquaintances or strangers, rather than other family members.
- They tend to result from an argument, usually alcohol precipitated.

Homicidal Intimates

- The proportion of homicides involving intimate partners has remained stable at around 21 per cent, with an average of about 76 homicide incidents per year.
- Just over three-quarters of intimate partner homicides involved a male offender and a female victim.
- Most lethal arguments between intimates were over the offender’s jealousy and possessiveness or the consumption of alcohol or drugs.
- In just over a quarter of intimate partner homicides between 1996/97 and 1998/99, there was documented evidence of a prior history of domestic violence, with only 3 per cent of cases having evidence that an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) had been taken out against a male offender.

Homicidal Women

- Women who kill tend to kill men. However, only 13 per cent of homicides are committed by females.
- Women are more likely to kill (in descending order of frequency) husbands, ex-husbands, defacto partners, and lovers, followed by children and other relatives.
- Very few women kill strangers.
- Typically, when women kill a male intimate partner, they kill someone with whom they have experienced a long history of violent conflict.

Killing Children

- Approximately 9 per cent of all homicide victims were aged under 15, this proportion has remained quite stable each year since 1989.
- Children are most likely to be killed in a residential location, with the use of physical force (hands or feet) and as a result of either a domestic dispute between family members, or fatal abuse.
- Biological parents, usually the mother, were responsible for a majority of child killings in Australia. Very rarely are children killed by a stranger.

Homicidal Children

- Killings by children (aged under 17) are more commonly committed in groups of 2 or more, and are more likely to occur in the commission of another crime, usually a robbery “gone wrong”.
- On the rare occasions when children kill in Australia, they are most likely to be motivated to kill for money or drugs, and they are most likely to target a stranger.

Elderly Homicide

- The homicide of an elderly person is a relatively rare occurrence, with elderly victims accounting for approximately 7 per cent of all homicide victims across a 10-year period.
- Elderly persons were over-represented in homicide incidents occurring in the course of other crime, such as robbery.

Preventing Homicidal Encounters

- The prevention of homicide needs to be considered in the context of a much larger problem of controlling aggressive behaviour generally.
- Early intervention strategies, such as supporting parents through home visitation programs, education for both parents (parenting skills) and young persons (non-violent conflict resolution skills, management of anger, and development of self-control) can improve the general functioning of families.
- Reducing youth violence and subsequent violence in their adult years may be achieved through the increased availability and accessibility of alcohol/drug abuse treatment programs, employment or vocational opportunities, positive role models, and recreational facilities.
- Other situational crime prevention strategies discussed include: target hardening initiatives, community safety actions projects and accords to reduce violence at or near licensed venues, improved lighting, and the installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in public places.

Introduction

No other crime provokes as much interest as does homicide. Researchers and the public alike seek to understand the underlying motivations that drive a person to violently take the life of another. One can speculate, based on available information on incident, victim and offender characteristics, but unless one can delve into the mind of a murderer or place ourselves in their shoes—days, hours, minutes, or during the moment that the homicide is committed, one may never know exactly what makes a person kill.

Many would agree that the best indication of the level of violence in a given society is the annual homicide rate. The main reason for this is that homicide is a sufficiently serious offence that it will almost always come to the attention of the police. Moreover, homicide statistics bypass some of the limitations inherent in official crime statistics, such as fluctuations due to attitudinal changes, changes in counting rules, and law enforcement practices (Mukherjee 2000).¹ Therefore, the rate of homicide “has been the major indicator of violence levels around the world and serves as a “gold standard” of the level of violent crime” (Indermaur 1996, pp. 2–3).

Apart from homicide being the most serious offence under Australian law, it is also a statistically rare event, occurring less frequently than any other violent crime in Australia. It is an extreme form of violence with every single death due to homicide directly affecting many people. “Homicide leaves a devastating legacy in its wake. Family members, friends, community and the nation as a whole are left shattered, violated, vulnerable, betrayed, and wounded by the most reprehensible of all crimes—murder” (Burnley et al. 1998, p. 7).

Each single death due to homicide directly affects a wide circle of individuals. The impact of homicide is said to resemble the ever widening circles caused by a stone tossed into a pond. The circles

¹ However, it is also possible that some cases of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) are masked homicides. This may also be the case for some missing persons where the whereabouts of the person is unknown, although there are suspicious circumstances surrounding the person’s disappearance.

continue to spread until they become one with that entire body of water—permeating. Society, like the pond, is eventually and finally engulfed by waves of glaring trauma that go unnoticed, perhaps because we have become indifferent to the grisly reality of murder. As each murder is served up in the media for information, evaluation, and sometimes just entertainment, there remains a population of grieving and often forgotten survivors of homicide who are consumed by rage and saddled with pain (Burnley et al. 1998, p. 8).

Homicide also results in a significant cost to the community—the loss of potentially productive lives.

Previous Research

Research on homicide is constrained as a result of homicide being a rare occurrence. Hence, researchers are unlikely to directly observe the subjects of their study and, therefore, rely on secondary data, such as the data collected by police (Riedel 1999). There have been few studies of homicide in Australia.² Notable exceptions include the work undertaken by Grabosky et al. (1981), Wallace (1986), Strang (1991, 1992, 1993), Polk and Ranson (1991), Polk (1994a), James and Carcach (1997) and, more recently, Mouzos (1999).

All these studies have attempted to enhance our understanding by providing us with valuable insight into the complex act of homicide. One of the earlier Australian studies was undertaken by Grabosky et al. (1981). Grabosky and colleagues examined 67 cases of homicide and 1259 cases of serious assault committed between 1978 and 1980 in South Australia. The main aim of the report was “to enhance public awareness about the offences of homicide and serious non-sexual assaults, their victims, and the manner in which persons charged with the offences are dealt with in the South Australian criminal justice system” (p. ii).

Wallace (1986) studied homicide in New South Wales between 1968 to 1981 by analysing separately and jointly the various components of homicide. Strang (1991, 1992, 1993) produced the first reports based on the national data collected for the NHMP. Polk and Ranson (1991) and Polk (1994a) examined the homicide files of the office of the Coroner of the State of Victoria between 1985 to 1989, with the primary focus of exploration on the relationship between the victim and the offender. Following the work of

² See Appendix 1 for a list of publications based on NHMP data.

Strang, James and Carcach (1997) provided a detailed national overview of the four essential elements of homicide: the incident, victim, offender, and victim–offender relationship. Similarly, Mouzos (1999) examined the intentional killing of adult women (femicide) during a 9-year period (1989/90 to 1997/98), with specific focus on the similarities and differences between the killing of women versus the killing of men. This study also identified the circumstances that contributed to the likelihood of a woman being murdered in Australia.

Present Study

In line with previous research, the present study “will continue the well established tradition which calls for a focus of homicide research on the nature of the social relationship between offender and victim which leads up to the killing” (Polk 1994a, p. 7). The pioneering work of Wolfgang (1958) *Patterns in Criminal Homicide* still continues today to influence our way of thinking when it comes to homicide research. In examining Wolfgang’s contribution, Margaret Zahn (1991) put forth four specific aspects that research in homicide needs to cover:

- Trace the volume of killing over time in various geo-political units.
- Delineate clearly the types of homicide that exist, for homicide is a multi-dimensional, not uni-dimensional, phenomenon.
- Specify the particular populations affected by these different types.
- Determine the causes of increasing volume over time.

Accomplishing these four objectives will allow us to reach the ultimate objective which is the development of social policies that impact this lethal phenomenon (p. 27).

The present study will attempt to address all of these issues as they relate to homicide in Australia. Following the introduction, this study will provide a national profile of homicide in Australia and each of Australia’s eight states and territories, by presenting and analysing homicide data over a 10-year period. This will also include a detailed overview of the four essential components of homicide (incident, victim, offender, and victim–offender relationships), with specific focus on emerging trends and patterns over time, emphasising the importance of demographic differences, victim–offender relationships, and situational circumstances that contribute to fatal outcomes.

This will be followed by a more in-depth analysis of “homicidal encounters” based on the underlying assumption that a homicidal encounter is a “dynamic one, with the victim and the offender moving through complex social manoeuvres such that a description of the role of both parties is essential to understand the nature of the homicide” (Polk 1994a, p. 7).

This in-depth analysis will begin by focussing on homicides that have occurred in the course of other crime. This includes, for instance, robbery, sexual assault, theft, abduction/kidnapping. A homicide that takes place in the course of other crime consists of fundamentally dissimilar event circumstances, victim, and offender characteristics than a homicide that occurs for example, between intimate partners (Silverman and Kennedy 1993). It will also include an examination of mass and serial murders committed in Australia during a 10-year period. The discussion will be followed by an extensive examination of the different types of homicidal encounters in Australia and will describe patterns among and between the sub-populations of homicide. These will include males killing males, intimate partner homicide, homicidal women, homicidal children, and the victimisation of children and the elderly.

Last, but not least, the final chapter will bring together the principal findings of this study by combining them with corresponding preventative measures. The main intention is to go beyond simply discussing preventative approaches for homicide in general.

The main aim of this research is to provide both an overview of patterns and trends in homicide in Australia across a 10-year period, and examine more closely in a quantitative manner the processes in which people come to commit homicide in different settings. The act of homicide is, in reality, a heterogeneous class of acts (Daly and Wilson 1988). As we will see, the various sub-types of homicide are dependent upon the motivational driving force of the offender, the circumstances of the incident and, most importantly, the interaction between the victim and the offender (Silverman and Kennedy 1993).

The National Homicide Monitoring Program

Prior to the establishment of the NHMP at the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in 1990, there was no ongoing monitoring of homicide in Australia. According to National Committee on Violence (1990), there was a need for systematic information of the most extreme form of violence in Australia to provide for basic public understanding and reassurance and to

serve as the foundation for the rational formulation and implementation of public policy.

In response to this need for systematic monitoring of homicide in Australia, the National Committee on Violence (1990) in its report *Violence: Directions for Australia* recommended (Recommendation No. 103) the establishment of the NHMP. Following approval from all state and territory Police Commissioners, data collection began in 1990 for incidents occurring on or after 1 July 1989.

In brief, the aim of the NHMP is to identify as precisely as possible the characteristics which place them at risk of homicide victimisation and offending, and the circumstances which contribute to the likelihood of a homicide occurring.

There are two main data sources for the NHMP:

- Offence records derived from each Australian State and Territory Police Service supplemented as necessary with information provided directly by investigating police officers.
- State Coronial records such as toxicology and post-mortem reports.³

On an annual basis, the NHMP routinely collects information on some 77 variables on all homicides coming to the attention of police services throughout Australia. Data are then arranged into three related data sets: the incident file, which describes the case and its circumstances (for instance, location, time of the incident, status of investigation); the victim file, which contains socio-demographic information relating to the victims, details relating to the cause of death, and type of weapon used to kill the victims; and the offender⁴ file, which relates to perpetrators or suspects, where one has been identified, and includes data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the offender, his/her previous criminal history, alcohol/illicit drug use, state of mental health, and the offender's relationship to the victim.

The current data set of the NHMP covers a 10-year period, from 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999. Because homicide incidents can involve more than 1 victim

³ The law in each state and territory requires that all violent and unnatural deaths are reported to the Coroner. As of the 1 July 1996, additional information relating to whether the victim had consumed alcohol, or was under the influence of illicit/prescription drugs at the time of the incident, was also collected from coronial files from each state and territory.

⁴ At all times, the term "offender" refers to suspect offenders only, and not to convicted persons.

and/or offender and as not all data are available for every case, the sizes of the files differ.

Quality Control of Data

Throughout the period of data collection, the AIC has consistently sought to improve the quality of data and extensiveness of information⁵ contained in the NHMP. As the NHMP is based primarily on police records, the completeness of information, therefore, reflects the detail of records which were made available to the AIC by police in each jurisdiction at the time of data collection. While there are inherent shortcomings in police records (some homicides may in fact go unreported or undetected),⁶ of all forms of crime, homicide is probably the one best approached through study of official data (Polk 1994a).

More recently, the AIC has increased its efforts to improve the quality and accuracy of the data set. This involved of a number of tasks, such as the re-entering of incidents involving multiple victims and/or offenders, cross-checking of incident, victim, and offender details with original hard copy files, and updating the status of all unsolved homicides contained in the NHMP database. This last task required that a list of all recorded unsolved homicides in the NHMP to be sent to all state and territory police services, requesting information as to whether any of the listed unsolved homicide incidents have been subsequently solved. As a consequence of the quality control processes, the NHMP data outlined in the following chapters may contain some discrepancies from previous publications⁷ based on NHMP data.

⁵ As of 1 July 1996, the number of variables contained in the NHMP data collection form increased from 47 to 77 variables.

⁶ Unreported homicides fall into at least four categories: (1) Those murders that involve professional criminals whereby the body has been successfully disposed of and, therefore, hidden from authorities (a prime example is the Snowtown murders in Adelaide, South Australia where police uncovered multiple bodies hidden in a disused bank vault). (2) Those people reported missing each year and whose whereabouts have never been traced. It is safe to assume that a small number of these people may have been murdered, but their bodies never found (Wallace 1986). However, there have been instances where individual victims were identified even in circumstances where the body has not been discovered. (3) Infant deaths classified as "Sudden Death, Cause Unknown" (Category 798, ABS 1997a). It may be possible that a proportion of these deaths are deliberately inflicted but escape detection. Similarly, a number of children who reported to the victims of accidental falls, or other misfortunes, may also have been the victims of intentional injury (Strang 1996). (4) "Elder abuse" where the death is recorded as accidental (Polk 1994a).

⁷ Any discrepancy in figures is more likely to occur between 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1998.

Other Sources of Statistics on Homicide

In addition to the NHMP, there are two other sources of national statistics on homicides in Australia. These are *Recorded Crime* and *Causes of Death*, both produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The *Causes of Death* statistics are based on data derived from Coronial reports, whereas both the NHMP and *Recorded Crime* data source are based on police records.

It has come to the attention of some observers that yearly homicide figures derived from the NHMP differ from *Recorded Crime* data. There are a number of possible explanations for such a discrepancy.

Firstly, the counting principles practised by the NHMP and the ABS differ. The NHMP “count” the number of homicide incidents that have *occurred* in a given financial year, whereas the ABS “count” the number of homicides (victim based) that have been *recorded* in a given calendar year,⁸ even though the homicide may have occurred in a year other than the year it has been recorded. The NHMP, where possible, will record an incident the year it occurred.

Secondly, AIC staff collect the NHMP data directly from each police jurisdiction’s information systems. Furthermore, because homicide incidents are closely monitored from press clippings on a daily basis, AIC staff are in the position of knowing in advance most cases for which data are to be collected. In comparison, the ABS statistics are based on reports provided from each police jurisdiction. These statistics may be either victim or incident based (that is, based on the total number of “all” victims recorded (Productivity Commission 1999)). In addition, legal systems and reporting procedures also differ between states and territories. To illustrate the difference, on one occasion, a cross-border incident (1 incident with 1 victim) was counted in each of two jurisdictions.

Lastly, the NHMP figures are calculated for each financial year, and *not* according to calendar year as done by the ABS. Financial and calendar year data are not directly comparable. Despite the inconsistencies which may result from these different practices, overall they do not affect the validity of the analysis and interpretation of data from the NHMP (James and Carcach 1997).

⁸ The ABS follow police practice of recording homicides in the year the incident is detected or is some cases deemed a homicide after the police have received legal advice.

Discrepancies in homicide figures also occur in the official publications produced by each Australian police service, as compared with those produced by the ABS. Victoria Police have indicated in their publications that the ABS National Crime Statistics only include approximately 70 per cent of all crime recorded by Victoria Police, although this may not necessarily apply to the offence of homicide (*Victoria Police Provisional Crime Statistics 1998/99*). Moreover, it has been noted that in some annual reports produced by state and territory police, the figures vary from year to year. This is said to be a result of “time delays that sometimes occur with the entry of Crime Reports” (Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services 1998).

Definition of Homicide

The definition of homicide is found in the criminal law of all Australian states and territories. Wording of the definition varies across states and territories somewhat in terms of degree, culpability, and intent. However, for the purposes of the NHMP, the definition of homicide is the operational definition used by police throughout Australia. As such, the NHMP collects data on the following incidents:

- All cases resulting in a person or persons being charged with murder or manslaughter (including the charge of “dangerous act causing death” which applies to the Northern Territory). This excludes other driving-related fatalities, except where these immediately follow a criminal event such as armed robbery or motor vehicle theft.
- All murder-suicides classed as murder by the police.
- All other deaths classed by the police as homicides (including infanticides), even though no suspect offender has been apprehended.

Attempted murder is excluded, as are violent deaths such as industrial accidents involving criminal negligence (unless a charge of manslaughter is laid). Lawful homicide, including incidents involving police in the course of their duties, is also excluded.

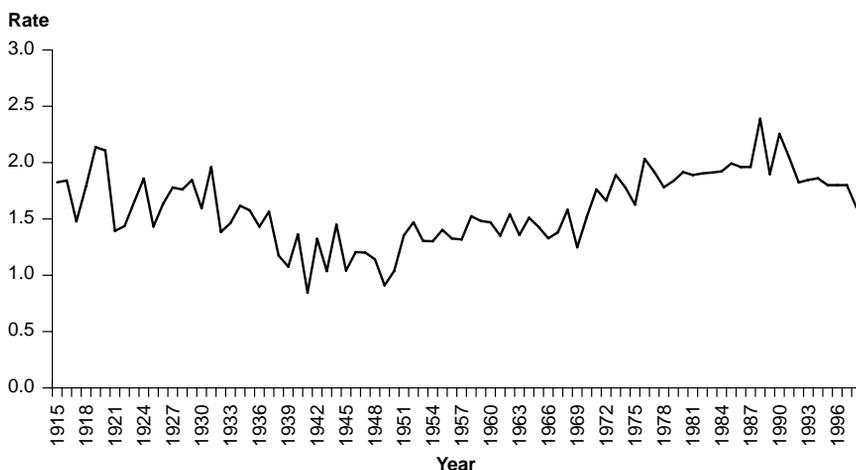
We now turn to a discussion of long-term homicide trends in the twentieth century. In the discussion of trends that will follow, the focus will be on both national and international trends in homicide, both long-term trends and short-term fluctuations around these long-term trends (Donohue 1998).

Homicide Trends in the Twentieth Century

Situating Australian levels of homicide within a historical and international perspective allows us to make cross-cultural comparisons and to identify any changing patterns in the occurrence of homicide. It is important to distinguish between stable trends and temporary fluctuations because random events can result in an escalation of the rate of crime (Donohue 1998). Take for example the Port Arthur incident in Tasmania where 35 individuals were killed in 1 incident. As a result, the state's homicide rate increased from 1.48 per 100,000 population in 1995 to a rate of 8.22 in 1996 (ABS 1996).

The annual homicide rates in Australia from 1915 to 1998 are displayed in Figure 1. There was a long-term decline during the first half of the twentieth century, with the homicide rate being the lowest during the period of the World War II (1939–1945).⁹ The rate then increased substantially to a plateau of about 1.5 per 100,000 population in the 1950s and 1960s. An upward trend occurred during the 1970s, reaching the level of around 2.0 per 100,000 population at the end of that decade. Since then, the rate has remained relatively stable, except for two temporary fluctuations in the 1980s. One of those temporary fluctuations in the 1980s resulted in the highest homicide rate recorded in Australia (rate of 2.4 per 100,000 population in 1988). This is more than double the rate observed in 1950 (Indermaur 1996).

Figure 1: AUSTRALIA, Trends in Homicide 1915–1998: Rate per 100,000 Population



Source: Adapted from *Causes of Death* data, ABS.

⁹ The year 1941 recorded the lowest homicide rate of 0.8 per 100,000 population in Australia.

The rise in homicide rates in the post-war period has been subject to various explanations. One explanation for this rise is the changing demography of the Australian population. As the proportion of the young male population increases, so does the homicide rate (Indermaur 1996).

A visual interpretation of Figure 1 suggests that there were four distinct periods in the Australian homicide trend line post-war:

- The period during the late 1940s and early 1950s, where there was a dramatic increase in the homicide rate.
- The period beginning in 1955, where the Australian homicide rate reached a plateau of 1.5 per 100,000 population.
- The period beginning in 1970, where the homicide rate increased to about 2.0 per 100,000 population.
- The period beginning in the 1980s where the homicide rate has remained relatively stable.

In contrast, Indermaur (1996) conducted a mathematical analysis where the trend is broken into two distinct periods—1951 to 1970 and 1971 to 1988. The reason for grouping the post-war period into two distinct periods is that the average rate in each period is significantly different. For example, the average for the period 1951 to 1970 was 1.4 per 100,000 population, whilst the average rate for the period 1971 to 1988 was 1.9 per 100,000 population.

According to Indermaur (1996, p. 3) the analysis suggests that:

the most substantial and significant component (period) of change in the homicide rate in the post-war period has been the increase by a third in the mean homicide rate between these two periods. As there is no substantial rise in the level since the 1970s, it is fair to conclude that the real level of violence in Australia has not increased over the last 20 years.

During the past decade, the United States has experienced some remarkable changes in their homicide rate¹⁰ (Figure 2). The United States homicide rate in 1980 peaked at 10.2 per 100,000 population and by 1985 the rate declined to 7.9 per 100,000 population. The homicide rate then increased approximately 24 per cent to peak at 9.8 in 1991. Since 1991, the homicide rate has been on a steady decline, reaching a level of 7.4 in 1996, and 6.8 in

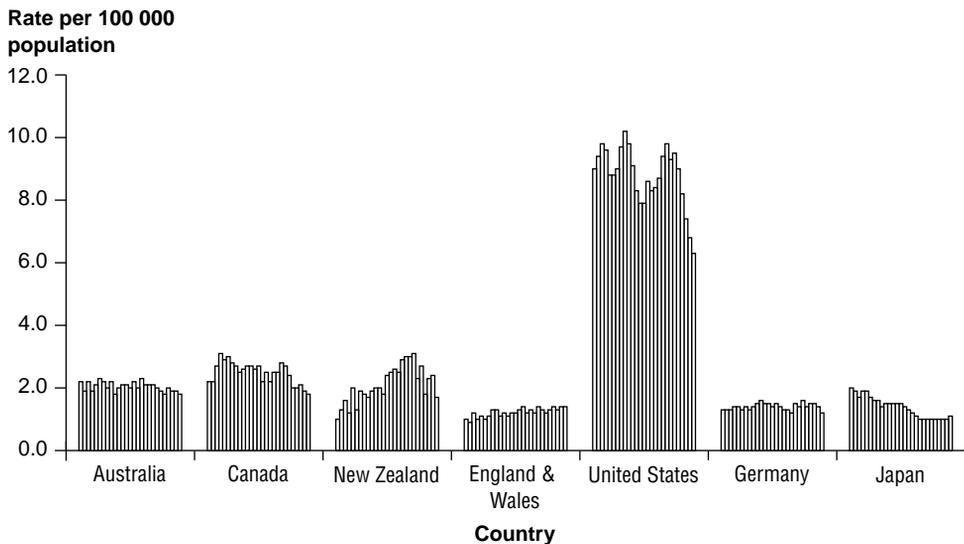
¹⁰ Although the United States had experienced earlier dramatic changes in their homicide rate—between 1900 and 1935, the homicide rate increased almost tenfold (Lunde 1975).

1997, which is lower than any annual homicide rate since 1967 (Blumstein and Rosenfeld 1998). Preliminary data for 1998 brings the United States homicide rate down to 6.3 per 100,000 population (United States Department of Justice 1999).

A number of analysts have speculated about the factors contributing to the dramatic decline in the homicide rate in the United States. Blumstein and Rosenfeld (1998) hypothesised that there are two distinct groups of factors that may be responsible for the decline: (1) *independent forces* (for example, stabilisation of drug markets, economic expansion, increase in rates of imprisonment, and increasing economic opportunities for women) that evolved on their own and contributed to the decline; and (2) *reactive forces* that responded to the increase in homicide by reversing the trend (for example, police programs to remove guns from young men and community efforts).

Blumstein and Rosenfeld (1998, p. 1208) emphasise that “these two type of factors are distinct from one another in important respects, their impact on homicide rates is fundamentally interactive: multiple factors are almost certainly responsible for the recent homicide decline, and the effectiveness of any single factor depends on the presence of others”.

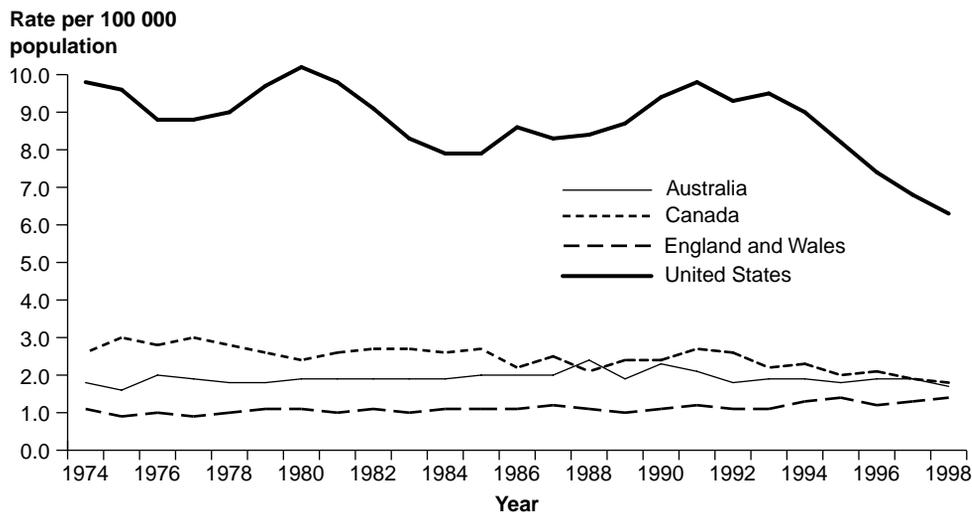
Figure 2: International Trends in Homicide* 1972–1998



* Includes murder and manslaughter (not by driving), except in the United States which includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter. Japan includes murder and attempts, but excludes deaths of victims in the process of robbery and rape.

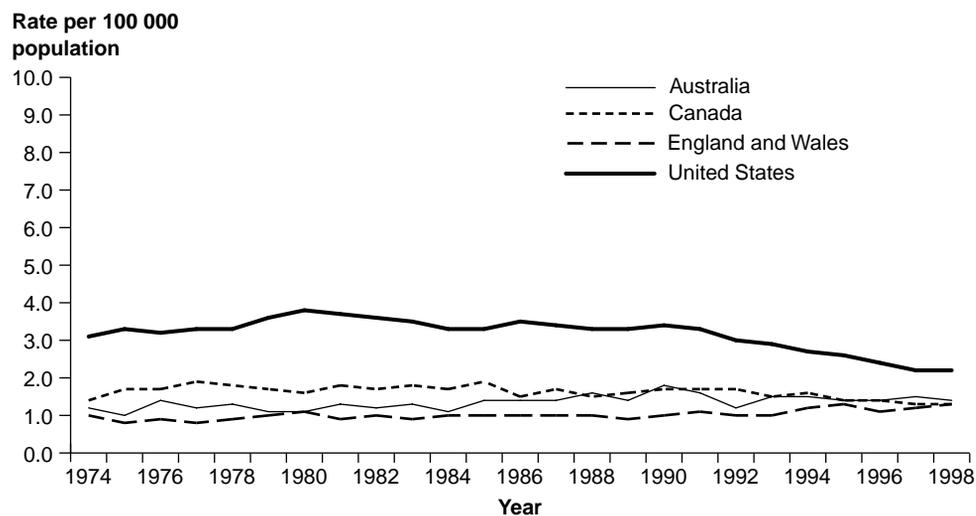
Source: Australia: *Police Annual Reports*, Canada: *Statistics Canada*, New Zealand: *Police Annual Report to Parliament*, United States: *Crime in the United States*, Germany: *Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik: Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik, Bundeskriminalamt*, Japan: *Summary White Paper on Crime in Japan*.

**Figure 3: Comparison of Homicide Rates in Four Countries, 1974–1998
All Homicides**



Sources: Australia: *Police Annual Reports*, Canada: *Statistics Canada*, England and Wales: *Criminal Statistics England and Wales*, United States: *Crime in the United States*.

**Figure 4: Comparison of Homicide Rates in Four Countries, 1974–1998
Excluding Homicides by Firearm**



Sources: Australia: *Police Annual Reports*, Canada: *Canadian Crime Statistics*, England and Wales: *Criminal Statistics England and Wales*, United States: *Crime in the United States*.

Possibly as a result of the employment of “reactive forces” (Blumstein’s second point), firearm-related homicides have also declined. As previously stated, the United States has a relatively high homicide rate compared to other industrialised countries. However, a different picture emerges when firearm-related homicides are excluded from the homicide rates of four selected countries—Canada, England and Wales, the United States, and Australia (Figures 3 and 4).

When firearm-related homicides are excluded from analysis, the homicide rates for all four countries not only converge but the proportionate ratio between them decreases substantially. This effect is more evident in the United States homicide rates, which show the greatest decrease and stability (Figure 4). It is also clear that the non-firearm-related homicide rates of Australia, Canada, England and Wales are much closer to one another and to United States rates than are the total homicide rates with firearms homicides included.

In comparison to United States, Australia has not experienced any such extreme fluctuations in their homicide rates. This is mostly characteristic of the homicide rates for other countries as well (see Figure 2 and Figure 5).

Currently, Japan and the United States occupy the two extreme positions in the homicide rate—the former having the lowest homicide rate of 1.1 per 100,000 population and the latter presenting the highest rate of 6.3 per 100,000 population (Figure 2). Of the remaining five countries, the homicide rate appears to be relatively stable across the 26 year period, with the exception of New Zealand, whose rate fluctuated between 1.0 in 1972 and 3.1 per 100,000 population in 1992. Because of the small number of homicides in New Zealand, random fluctuations are capable of distorting short-term patterns and trends. England and Wales and Germany have a lower homicide rate than Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

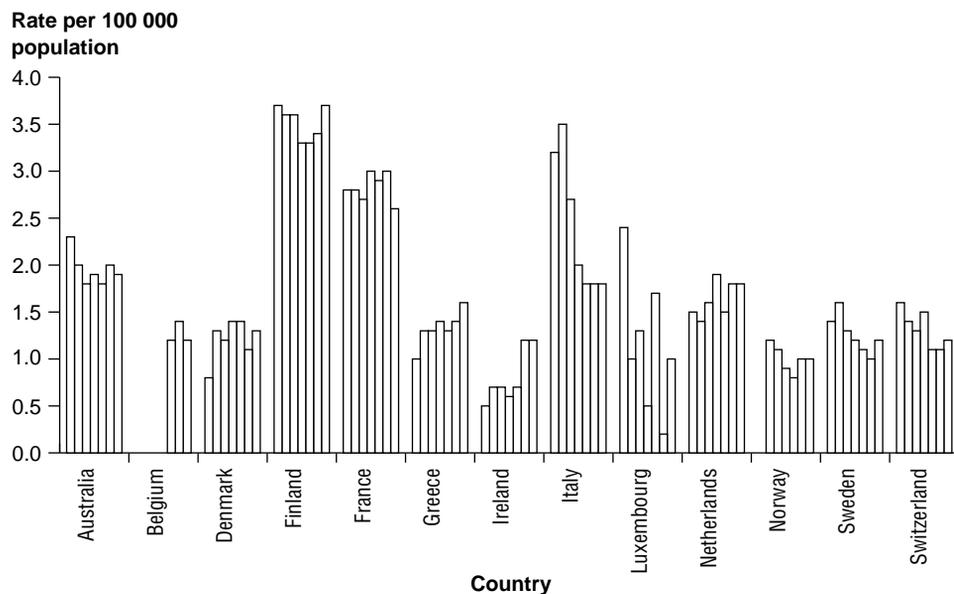
Comparing Australia to twelve other countries reveals that Australia has had the third highest homicide rate in 1992, 1994,¹¹ 1995 and 1996. There has been a slight declining trend in the homicide rate of some countries over the 7-year period (Figure 5).

Although a description of changing homicide rates is important, knowledge of offending and victim–offender relationships over time, as well as the circumstances that seem conducive to the occurrence of homicide, can help

¹¹ Australia was equal third with Italy.

enhance our understanding of homicide (Zahn and McCall 1999). Similarly, it is also important to disaggregate the homicide rate to distinguish between events involving persons known to each other and those involving parties without a prior relationship (Zahn and Jamieson 1997). The following chapter provides a 10-year overview of the four essential components of homicide in Australia.

Figure 5: International Homicide 1990–1996: Completed Offences per 100,000 Population



Source: *European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics 1999*.

Homicide in Australia: A Brief Overview

This chapter will present a statistical profile of homicide in Australia and each of Australia's eight states and territories over a 10-year period. It seeks to identify those variables most commonly associated with homicide victimisation and offending and whether there have been any significant changes over time. This will provide the backdrop to a more detailed examination of the distinct types of homicidal encounters discussed in later chapters.

Previous Australian studies have revealed that patterns of homicide in Australia have remained relatively stable over the years (James and Carcach 1997). This is still the case.

Incident Characteristics

Much recent research has focussed on the interaction between victim and offender as interdependent participants in an inherently social event (Polk and Ranson 1989, 1991; Silverman and Mukherjee 1987; Silverman and Kennedy 1993). Indeed, the victim may often "shape and mould" the offender (von Hentig 1979). However, situational factors are also important in understanding the nature of the offence and the role that spatial and temporal factors play in determining the particular social interactions that lead to lethal violence. As we will demonstrate the demographic and situational characteristics of homicidal encounters play a significant role in shaping the type of lethal outcome:

... homicide is not randomly distributed through time and space. Violent deaths occur at particular times, in particular places ... with specific sets of participants (Wallace 1986, p. 61).

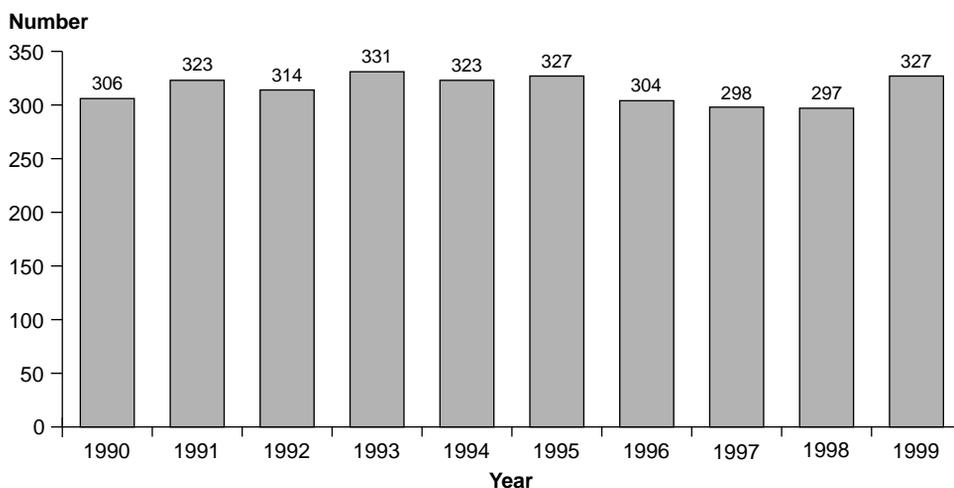
Long-Term Trends

Lethal violence has been described both in terms of changing rates and different types (Zahn and Jamieson 1997). On this occasion, we are interested

in the incidence of homicide, mainly in total numbers. A homicide *incident* is defined as one single, distinct event, regardless of the number of victims and offenders. The incident count will, therefore, be lower than the victim and/or offender count due to incidents involving multiple victims and/or offenders. This section will be concerned with homicide incidents, unless otherwise stated.

In Australia, during the period from 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999 there were 3150 homicide incidents.¹² The latest financial year—1998/99 recorded 327 homicide incidents, an increase of approximately 10 per cent from the previous year. In contrast, 1997/98 recorded the lowest number of homicide incidents (n = 297) since the inception of the NHMP in 1989. Recording the lowest and one of the highest¹³ incidences of homicide, two extremes one year after another, clearly demonstrates that homicide is an infrequent offence that is subject to marked yearly fluctuations. Despite these year-to-year fluctuations, the incidence of homicide across the 10-year period under review has remained relatively stable (Figure 6).

Figure 6: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Homicide Incidents per Year (n = 3,150)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

¹² Approximately 11 per cent of these homicide incidents were recorded as unsolved; that is, the police had yet to identify and charge an offender(s).

¹³ The year 1994/95 also recorded 327 homicide incidents.

Jurisdictional Trends

A breakdown of the distribution of incidents by jurisdiction for the 10-year period and the most current year (see Table 1) reveals that, as in previous years (see James and Carcach 1997), the distribution of homicide incidents reflects the distribution of the Australian population. However, there are a number of exceptions which require mentioning: the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory, and Victoria.

According to the December 1998 estimates of resident population (ABS 1998), the Northern Territory only comprises of 1 per cent of the total Australian population. In comparison, the number of homicide incidents in the Northern Territory comprise 5.2 per cent of the total number of homicide incidents, indicating a five-fold over-representation of Northern Territory in the incidence of homicide. On the other hand, the Australian Capital Territory comprises 1.6 per cent of the total Australian population, but only 0.6 per cent of the total number of homicide incidents in 1998/99. Similarly, Victoria comprises 25 per cent of the total Australian population, but in the most recent year, Victoria recorded only 16.8 per cent of the total number of homicide incidents in Australia.

Australia's year-to-year fluctuations in the incidence of homicide across the 10-year period under review (Figure 6) are inherently a function of the yearly fluctuations in Australia's eight states and territories (Figure 7).

Table 1: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: Distribution of Homicide Incidents by Jurisdiction

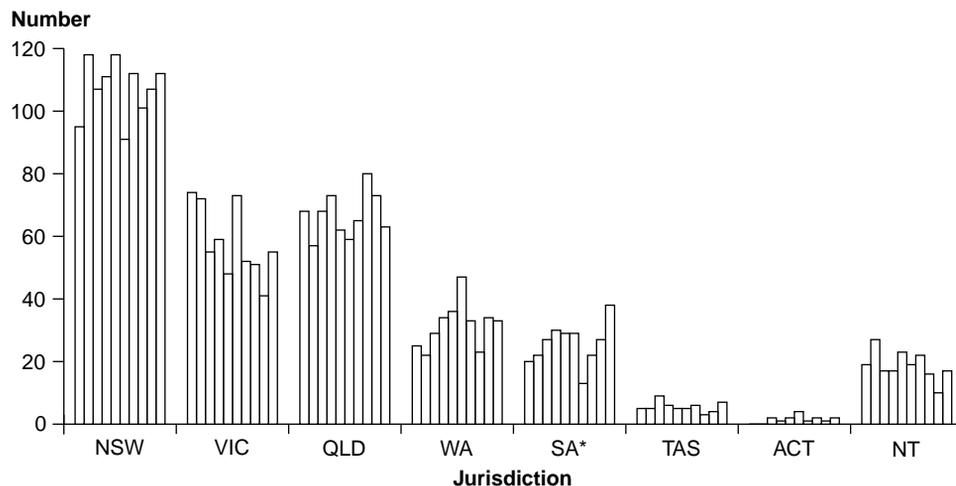
	1989/90–1998/99		1998/99	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
New South Wales	1072	34.0	112	34.3
Victoria	580	18.4	55	16.8
Queensland	668	21.2	63	19.3
Western Australia	316	10.0	33	10.1
South Australia	257	8.2	*38	*11.6
Tasmania	55	1.7	7	2.1
Australian Capital Territory	15	0.5	2	0.6
Northern Territory	187	5.9	17	5.2
AUSTRALIA	3150	100.0	327	100.0

* The incidence of homicide in South Australia increased in 1998/99 as a result of the 11 incidents known as the "Snowtown Murders".¹⁴

Source: NHMP, AIC.

¹⁴ Similar to Port Arthur incident in Tasmania in 1995/96, the Snowtown murders in South Australia will inevitably result in an increase in the number of homicide incidents (and victims) recorded in 1998/99. These freak events may dramatically increase the incidence for any given year, therefore providing a distorted overall picture of homicide.

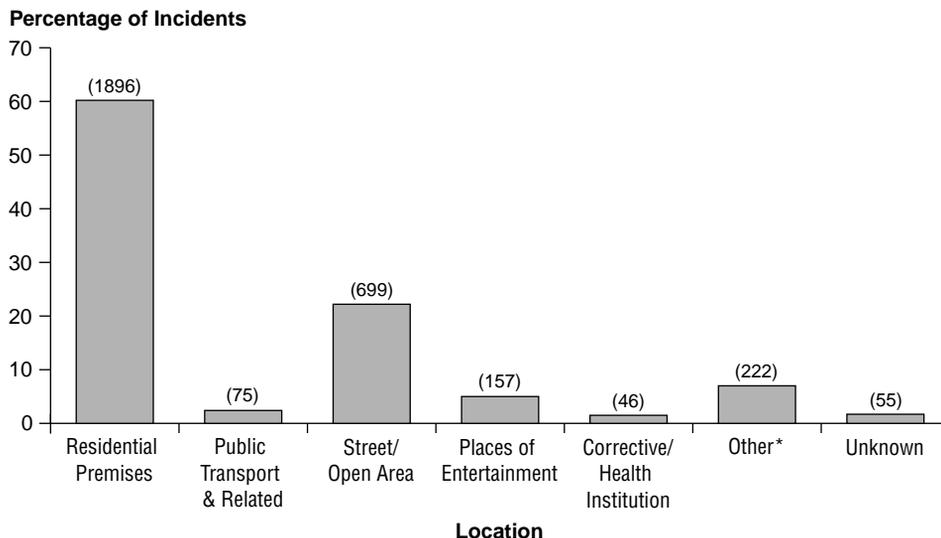
Figure 7: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: Distribution of Homicide Incidents per Year, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999 (n = 3,150)



* Includes the "Snowtown Murders" in 1998/99.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 8: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Location (n = 3,150)



Number of incidents that occurred in each location are shown in brackets.

* Other includes shops, shopping malls, banks/credit unions/post offices, car parks/public garages/service stations, workplace/schools, and other commercial premises.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Incident Location

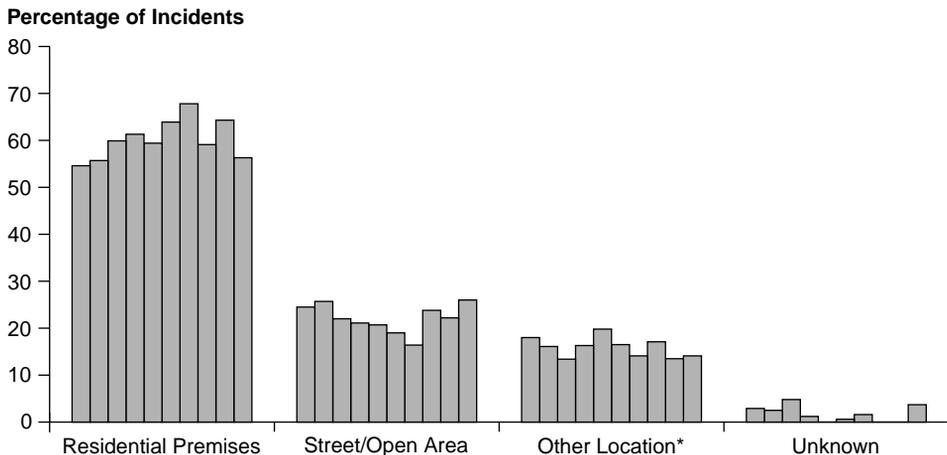
Homicide is an offence that most commonly occurs in residential premises (see for example Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 1998; Adinkrah (1996); NZ Police Murder Statistics 1998). Just under two-thirds of all incidents (60.2%) in Australia between 1989/90 and 1998/99 were committed in residential premises (Figure 8). Almost 80 per cent of the incidents that occurred in residential premises occurred in the victim’s home.

Less than a quarter (22.2%) took place on the street/road/highway or other open areas such as parkland, bushland or in or near a waterway.

Approximately 5 per cent of all homicide incidents occurred at some place of entertainment (for example, pubs, discos, and clubs). Only 2.4 per cent of all homicide incidents occurred in public transport or related places such as railway stations and taxis (Figure 8).

There has been a decreasing trend up until 1995/96 and then a trend reversal since 1996/97 in the percentage of incidents occurring in a street or open area. In the most recent year 1998/99, 26 per cent of all homicide incidents occurred in a street or open area. This may simply reflect year-to-year fluctuations (Figure 9).

Figure 9: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Location and Year (n = 3,150)



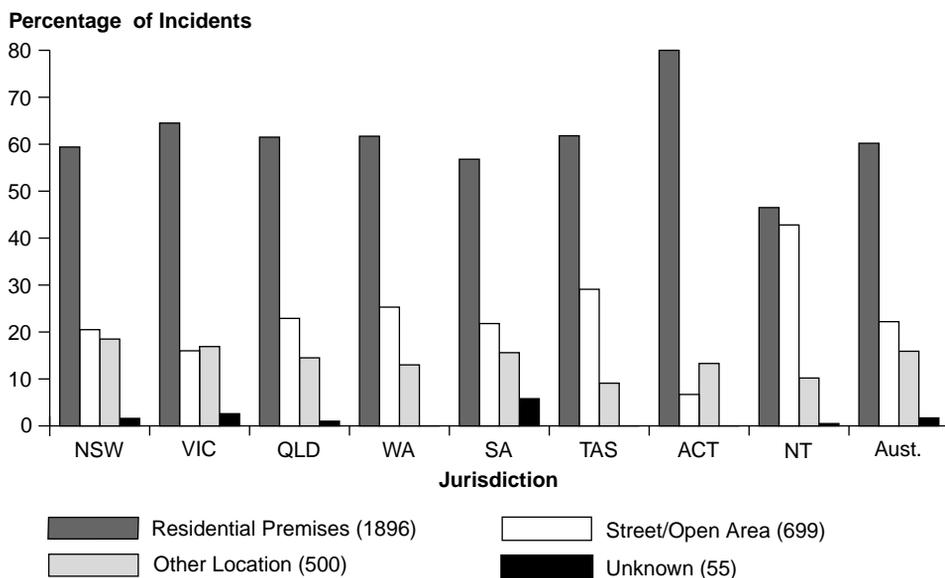
* "Other location" includes shops, shopping malls, banks/credit unions/post offices, car parks/public garages/service stations, workplace/schools, and other commercial premises, and public transport and related facilities, places of entertainment, and corrective/health institution.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

A jurisdictional comparison reveals that there appear to be very little differences in the distribution of homicide incidents according to location (Figure 10). There are, however, two exceptions. The relative low number of homicide incidents in the Australian Capital Territory (a total of 15 homicide incidents in 10 years) will tend to skew any percentage distributions.

In contrast, the distribution of incidents according to location in the Northern Territory indicates that incidents in that jurisdiction are equally likely to occur indoors or outside. Across the 10-year period under review, 46.5 per cent of incidents in the Northern Territory occurred in residential premises, and 42.8 per cent occurred in a street or open area. This finding is not surprising given the large number of homicides of Indigenous Australians in this area (approximately 70% of victims killed in the Northern Territory were Indigenous). Similarly, previous findings indicate that homicides of Indigenous Australians are most likely to occur in a location other than a residential premise (Mouzos 1999).

Figure 10: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Location and Jurisdiction, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999 (n = 3,150)



* Other location includes shops, shopping malls, banks/credit unions/post offices, car parks/public garages/service stations, workplace/schools, and other commercial premises, and public transport and related facilities, places of entertainment, and corrective/health institution.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Geographical Distribution

Violent criminal behaviour may be a function of urbanisation and population density, with urbanisation being one of the factors associated with fostering an environment conducive to criminal behaviour (Wallace 1986). In general, rates of violent crime tend to be greater in the urban areas, with residents of large cities being at significantly greater risk than their country counterparts (National Committee on Violence 1990).

In Australia, approximately 86 per cent of the population live in urban areas (*Year Book of Australia* 1999).¹⁵ Half the area of Australia contains only 0.3 per cent of the population and the most densely populated 1 per cent of the continent contains 84 per cent of the population. Moreover, there is a higher level of urbanisation among the non-Indigenous population; Indigenous people are more likely to live in very remote areas than the rest of the population.

Analysis of the spatial distribution of homicide incidents in Australia indicates that although 85.7 per cent of the homicide incidents occurred in densely populated areas, there was no significant difference between the geographical distribution of the Australian population and the geographical distribution of homicide incidents.

Time of Incident

Considering the routine activities of people, their social habits, the times that they are most likely to be at home, engage in social drinking, and when are they most likely to become irritable, may provide some insight as to why over two-thirds (68.0%) of all homicide incidents in Australia occurred between 6pm and 6am (Figure 11). Only 12 per cent of incidents occurred between 6am and noon.

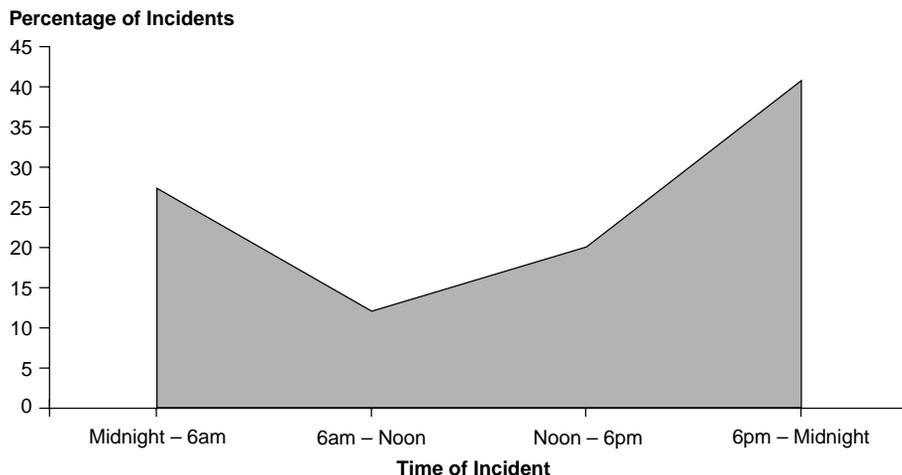
Day of the Week

There does not appear to be much variation in the distribution of homicide incidents according to day of the week of occurrence (Figure 12). This pattern has remained fairly consistent every year. However, nearly half of all homicide incidents occurred on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. Similarly, a separate analysis examining time of the incident and day of the week revealed that apart from incidents on Sunday occurring during the early hours of the morning (midnight to before 6am), incidents that occurred on

¹⁵ Urban area is defined as those with populations of more than 1,000 people.

the other days were mostly committed during the evening (6pm to midnight). Regardless of the day of the week, an incident was least likely to occur between 6am and before noon.

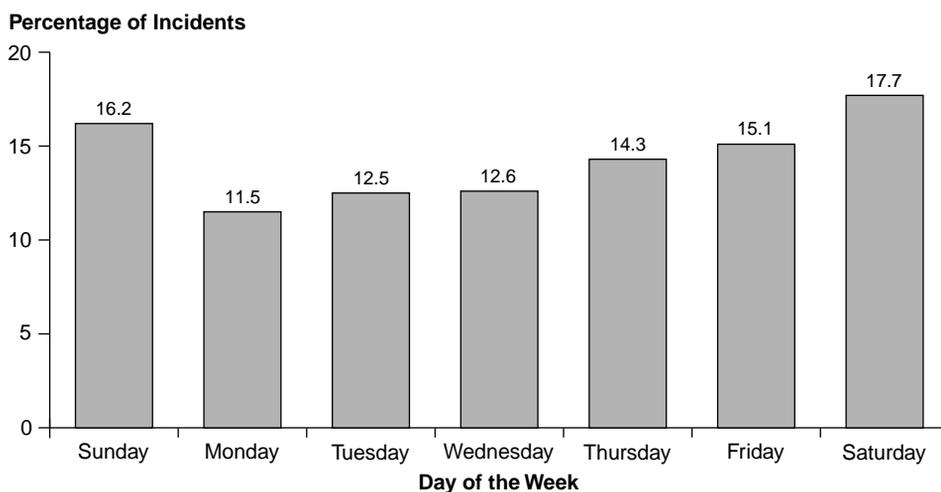
Figure 11: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Time of the Day of Occurrence (n = 2,900)*



* Excludes 250 incidents where time of occurrence was not known.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 12: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Day of the Week of Occurrence (n = 3,109)*



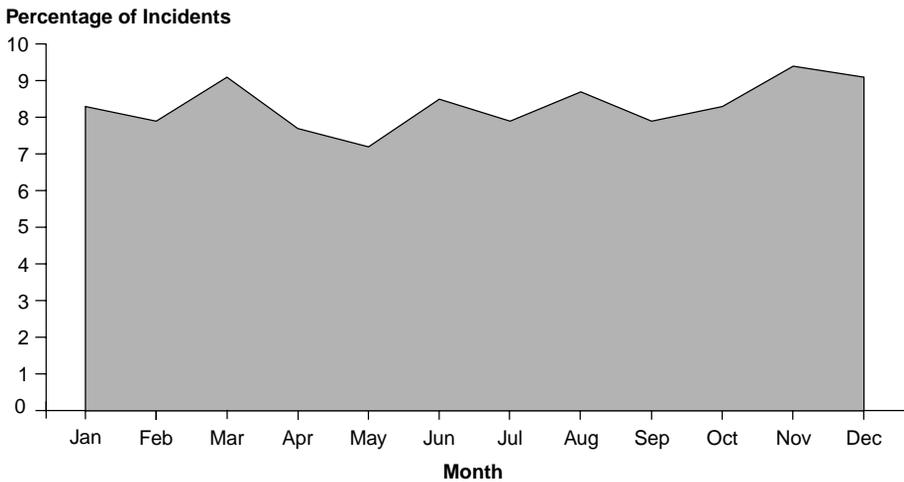
* Excludes 41 incidents where day of the week of occurrence was not known.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Month of the Year

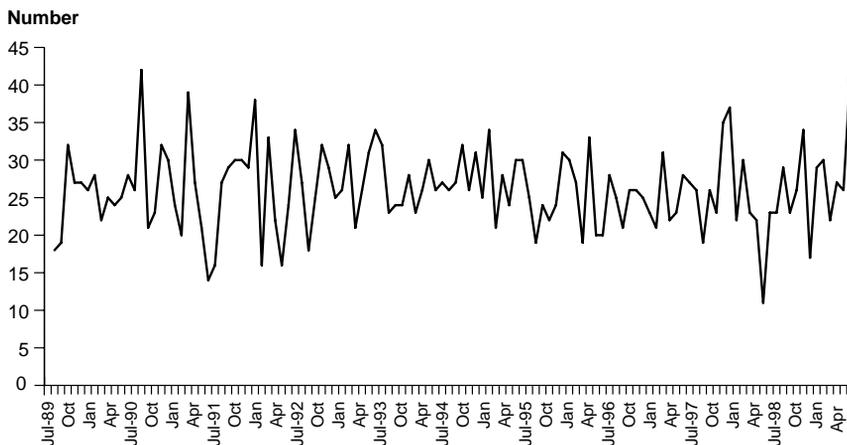
The distribution of incidents by month of the year showed the least variation of the three temporal settings—time, day, and month (see Figure 13), although there were marked fluctuations on a month-to-month basis (see Figure 14). Overall, there does not appear to be any seasonal pattern in the distribution of homicide incidents during the 10-year period.

Figure 13: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to Month of Occurrence (n = 3,126)*



* Excludes 24 incidents where month of occurrence was not known.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 14: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Homicide Incidents According to Month of Occurrence per Year (n = 3,126)*



* Excludes 24 incidents where month of occurrence was not known.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

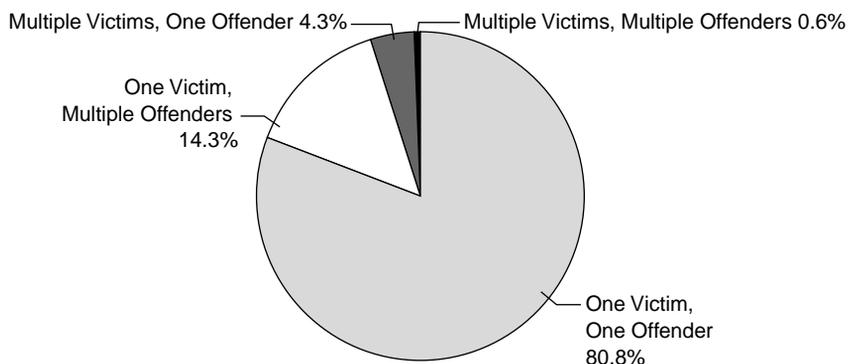
Multiple Victim and Multiple Offender Incidents

A majority of homicide incidents can be characterised as a “one-on-one” interaction between the victim and the offender. In Australia, approximately 81 per cent of all homicide incidents (where an offender has been identified) involve only 1 victim and 1 offender (a slight increase from the previous 7-year figure of 80 per cent, see James and Carcach 1997). In 4.3 per cent of the incidents, there was more than 1 victim,¹⁶ but only 1 offender (for example, the Port Arthur incident where there was 1 offender and 35 victims), while in 14.3 per cent of incidents there was more than 1 offender and only 1 victim.¹⁷ Approximately 1 per cent of homicide incidents involve multiple victims and multiple offenders (see Figure 15).

Furthermore, an analysis of the yearly distribution of incidents involving multiple victims indicates that there is a slight declining trend in multiple victim homicide across the 10-year period under review (Figure 16). In 1998/99, only 4 per cent of incidents involved multiple fatalities.

In Australia, there have been 150 recorded multiple killings during the period 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999, resulting in 387 deaths. On average, there are 15 multiple fatality incidents per year, resulting in approximately 39 victims.

Figure 15: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Homicide Incidents According to the Number of Victims and Offenders (n = 2,803)*



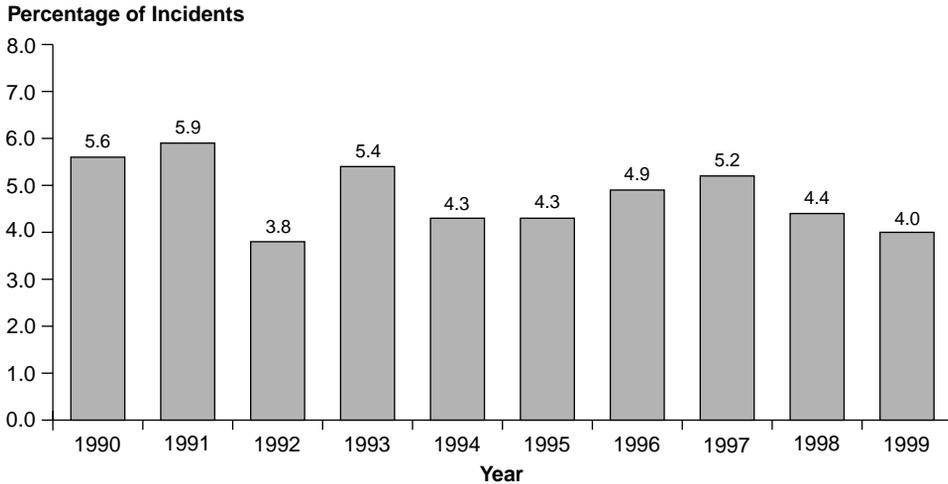
Excludes 347 incidents where there were an unknown number of offenders.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

¹⁶ Multiple victim homicide will be discussed in the “Mass and Serial Murders in Australia” chapter.

¹⁷ In two separate incidents, the NHMP recorded one victim with 11 offenders each.

Figure 16: AUSTRALIA: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Incidents with Multiple Victims (n = 150) as a Percentage of Total Homicide Incidents (n = 3,150)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Moreover, an examination of the distribution of multiple fatality incidents by jurisdiction during the period 1989/90 to 1998/99 reveals that some jurisdictions experienced a slightly higher incidence of multiple victim homicide. For example, New South Wales recorded 6.2 per cent, Victoria recorded 5.7 per cent, and Tasmania recorded 7.3 per cent of incidents with multiple fatalities. In contrast, it is interesting to note that the Australian Capital Territory did not record any multiple fatality homicide incidents during the 10-year period under analysis. Similarly, during the same period the Northern Territory recorded only 1 multiple fatality incident (this incident involved only 2 victims) (Figure 17).

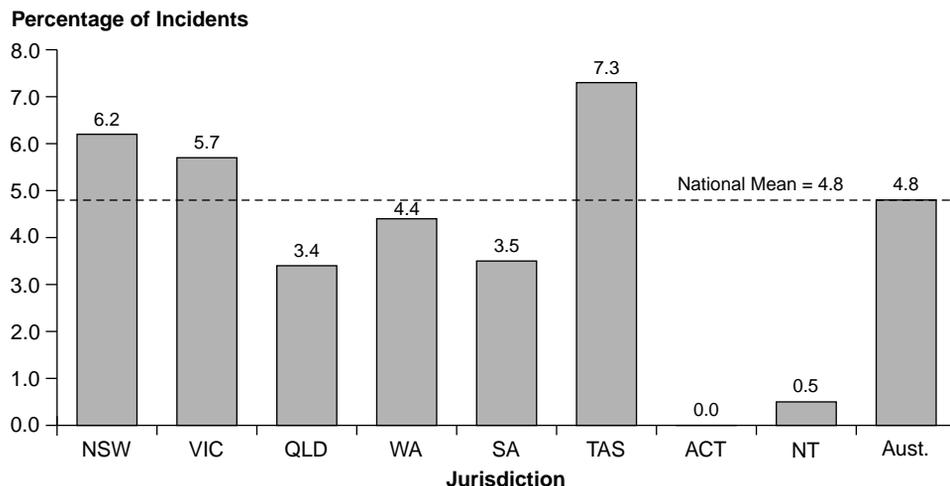
Gang-Related Incidents

Overseas research suggests that gang-related homicides most often reflect the dynamics of gang membership. This includes intergroup rivalries, neighbourhood turf battles (for example, competition in the supply of drugs in particular areas), identity challenges, and occasional intragroup status threats (Maxson 1999). Also, most victims of gang-related homicides are usually other gang members, although some incidents do involve the deaths of innocent bystanders (Maxson 1999).

In Australia, since the revision and extension of the NHMP data collection form in July 1998, we are now able to collect information on “whether there was any evidence of a gang killing involved in the incident” (Q. 14). Such information has now been collected from the year 1996/97 onwards. From 1996/97 to 1998/99, there were 32 incidents recorded as being “gang related”. Twenty-two of these incidents were recorded as having occurred in the state of New South Wales and Victoria recorded 3 such incidents.

However, caution should be exercised when interpreting these findings, as there are a number of critical methodological issues relating to defining “gangs” and what constitutes “gang-related” crime. For example, “is gang member *participation* sufficient to designate a crime as gang-related, or is it necessary that the *motive* of the crime be linked to gang function?” (Maxson 1999, p. 200). For the present study, gang-related homicide incidents were recorded as such only if there was sufficient information in police files to indicate such involvement. Although it should be noted that the reliability of designations made by law enforcement agencies has been a matter of concern by some researchers in the study of gang homicides (Maxson 1999).

Figure 17: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Multiple Victim Homicide Incidents (n = 150) as a Percentage of all Homicide Incidents, Per Jurisdiction (n = 3,150)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Illicit Drug Involvement

In addition to recording information on gang-related homicide incidents, the NHMP data collection form also collects data on several variables relating to the involvement of illicit drugs in the homicide incident. Accordingly, the NHMP has recorded 299 incidents (or 9.5 % of all incidents) that had some type of illicit drug involvement during the 10-year period under review. Similarly, information on the type of illicit drug involved and the type of illicit drug are also recorded, although this information is very limited. Therefore, based on the information available (n = 64), approximately 25 per cent of these incidents, the dispute was in relation to drug dealing, a further 17.2 per cent of incidents involved “acquiring drugs for personal use”. In approximately 32 per cent of homicide incidents it was probable that drugs were involved, but no such evidence.

In addition, information on the type of illicit drugs involved (n = 59) indicates that heroin was the drug involved in 37.3 per cent of these incidents and marijuana was involved in 18.6 per cent of drug-related incidents. It is possible that these data are incomplete, with the extent of drug involvement being far greater than these figures may suggest. Many claim that up to 80 per cent of crime may be drug related (Makkai 1999). Furthermore, the AIC undertook a small number of pilot studies examining the relationship of illicit drugs and property and violent offending. The findings of the pilot studies suggest that there may be a link between illicit drugs and violent offending (AIC 1998). Taking into account the findings of previous studies, a more detailed examination of the relationship between illicit drugs and lethal violence is required in order to determine the extent of illicit drug involvement in homicide and the nature of this relationship.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ideally, this study would be based on a random sample of all homicide incidents that indicate some type of illicit drug involvement. In order to overcome the problems associated with incompleteness and subjective assessments, this study would also supplement any existing information on selected homicide incidents with additional information contained in Police Briefs of Evidence.

Ten-Year Summary—Incident Profile

During the period from 1 July 1989–30 June 1999:

- The incidence of homicide has remained relatively stable.
- Just under two-thirds of all homicide incidents occurred in residential premises.
- There were no differences in the geographical distribution of homicide and the geographical distribution of the Australian population.
- Over two-thirds of homicide incidents occurred between 6pm and 6am.
- Nearly half of all homicide incidents occurred on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday.
- Homicide incidents were equally as likely to occur during any month of the year.
- Eight out of 10 homicide incidents can be characterised as “one-on-one” interactions between the victim and the offender.
- There was a slight declining trend in multiple victim homicides.
- One in 10 homicide incidents had some type of illicit drug involvement.

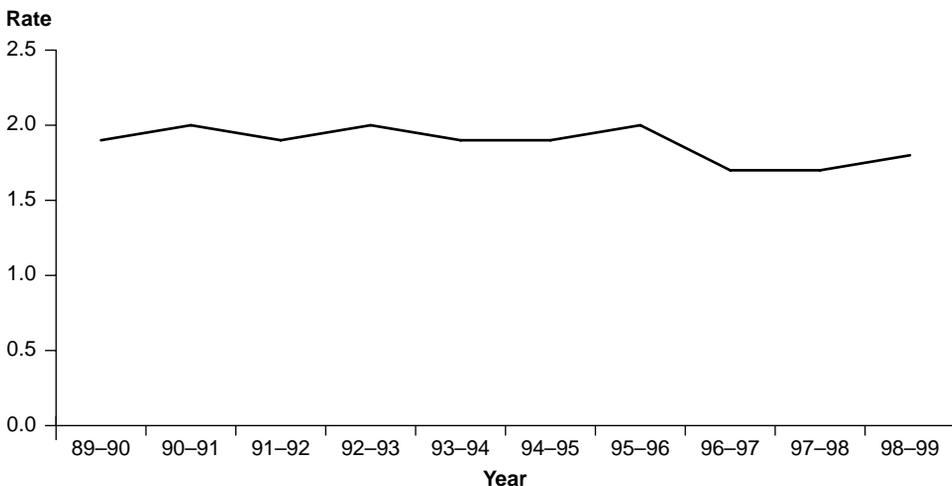
Victim Characteristics

The previous section examined the situational characteristics of homicide incidents. The findings indicated that a violent lethal encounter is not a random occurrence. Similarly, the risk associated with becoming a victim of homicide is not evenly spread across the Australian population. Some social, demographic, cultural, and psychological factors can predispose one to inflict or suffer lethal violence. This section will provide a profile of the victims of homicide in terms of social and demographic characteristics in an attempt to identify which characteristics are most commonly associated with homicide victimisation.

Trends in Victimisation

Homicide is an extreme yet rare event. From 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999 there were 3386 victims of homicide. In the most recent year 1998/99, there were 341 homicide victims recorded in Australia—an increase of 30 victims from the previous year (1997/98). Across the 10-year period under review, rates of victimisation have remained relatively constant fluctuating between 1.7 and 2.0 per 100,000 population (Figure 18). In 1998/99, the NHMP recorded a homicide victimisation rate of 1.8 per 100,000 population.

Figure 18: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimisation Rates per 100,000 Population



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Jurisdictional Trends

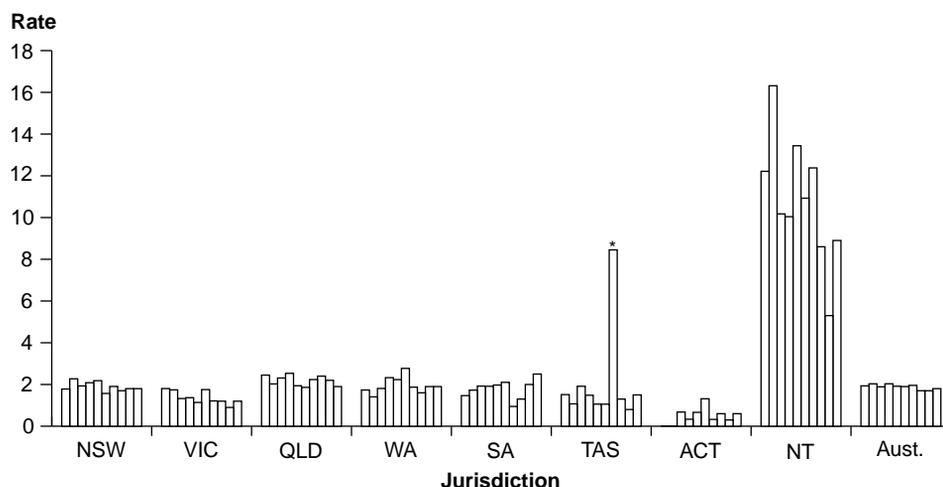
Homicide victimisation varies across jurisdictions (Figure 19). The Northern Territory has consistently had the highest rate of homicide victimisation per 100,000 population. In 1998/99, the Northern Territory recorded a victimisation rate of 8.9 per 100,000 population. Sherman (1993) suggests that the much higher rates of homicide victimisation in the Northern Territory may have something to do with the speed and quality of post-assaultive medical care which may affect the lethality of aggravated assaults, and hence the homicide rate for that jurisdiction.

Similarly, as noted above, freak events such as the Port Arthur incident and the Snowtown murders can result in a dramatic rise in the victimisation rates in a given jurisdiction. The effect that the Port Arthur incident had on the victimisation rate for Tasmania in 1995/96 is shown Figure 19.

Gender and Age

Numerous studies have indicated that lethal violence is a distinctively masculine matter, with men as the most common victims of homicides committed by both men and women (see Wallace 1986; Daly and Wilson 1988; Silverman and Kennedy 1993; Polk 1994a,b). Of the 3386 victims whose gender was identified,¹⁹ 2136 (63.2%) were male and 1244 (36.8%) were

Figure 19: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Population



* This includes the 35 victims of the Port Arthur incident.
Source: NHMP, AIC.

¹⁹ Excludes 6 victims whose gender was not recorded.

female. On average, during the 10-year period, approximately 214 males and approximately 124 females were killed each year.

Moreover, in terms of rates, females were killed at an average annual rate of 1.4 per 100,000 population. Males, on the other hand, were killed at an average annual rate of 2.4 per 100,000 population (Table 2). Across the period under review, there has been a relatively stable pattern of gender differentiation over the years, with a ratio of 3 males killed for every 2 females (Table 2, Figure 20).

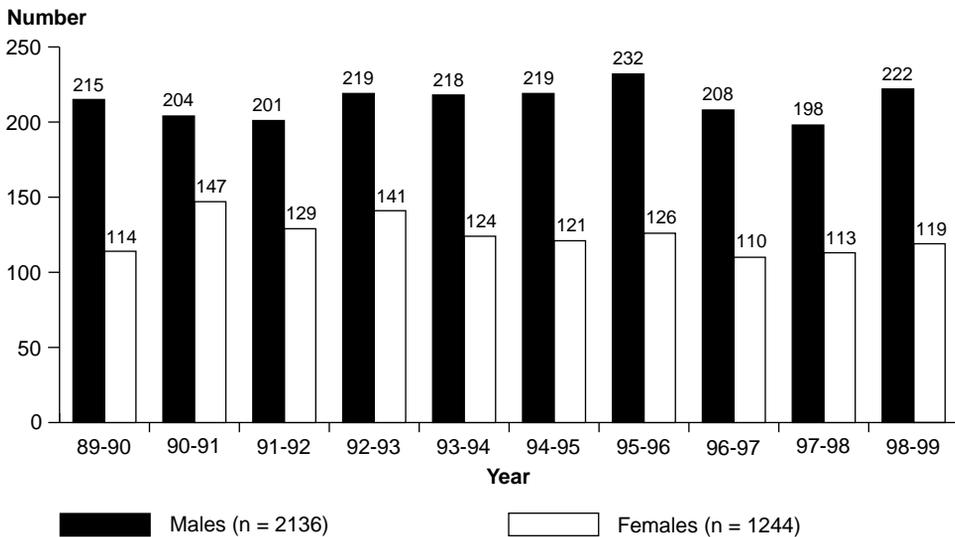
It is also important to note that this gender distribution has stood the test of time—previous research suggests that this pattern has remained consistent since 1982 (see Mouzos 1999). An analysis of *Causes of Death* data indicates that over the 67-year period between 1915 and 1981, on average males

Table 2: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Population, by Gender

	1989–1990	1990–1991	1991–1992	1992–1993	1993–1994	1994–1995	1995–1996	1996–1997	1997–1998	1998–1999	Average
Males	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.4
Females	1.3	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4
Persons	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9

Source: NHMP, AIC.

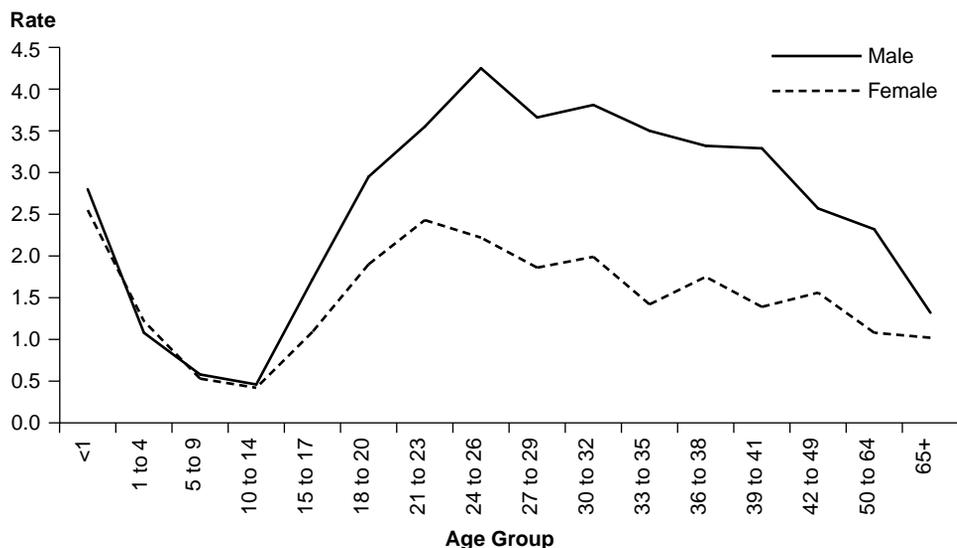
Figure 20: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Victims According to Gender (n = 3,380)*



* Excludes 6 victims whose gender was not recorded.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 21: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Relevant Population, by Gender and Age Group



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Table 3: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Rates per 100,000 Relevant Population, Gender and Age Group

Age (Years)	Male	Female	Persons
Less than 1	2.80	2.55	2.68
1 to 4	1.08	1.22	1.15
5 to 9	0.58	0.53	0.56
10 to 14	0.46	0.42	0.44
15 to 17	1.72	1.09	1.41
18 to 20	2.95	1.90	2.67
21 to 23	3.55	2.43	3.00
24 to 26	4.25	2.22	3.24
27 to 29	3.66	1.86	2.76
30 to 32	3.81	1.99	2.90
33 to 35	3.50	1.42	2.46
36 to 38	3.32	1.75	2.54
39 to 41	3.29	1.39	2.34
42 to 49	2.57	1.56	2.07
50 to 64	2.32	1.08	1.71
65+	1.32	1.02	1.15
Total	2.35	1.36	1.86
Median Age	33	31	33

Source: NHMP, AIC.

accounted for approximately 62 per cent of victims and females accounted for approximately 38 per cent of the homicide victims. However, Wallace (1986) reported that in New South Wales over the 1933–1981 period, the percentage of female victims had dropped slightly (42.3% in 1933–1957 to 39.8% in 1968–1981), while the proportion of male victims had risen (57.7% in 1933–1957 to 60.2% in 1968–1981).

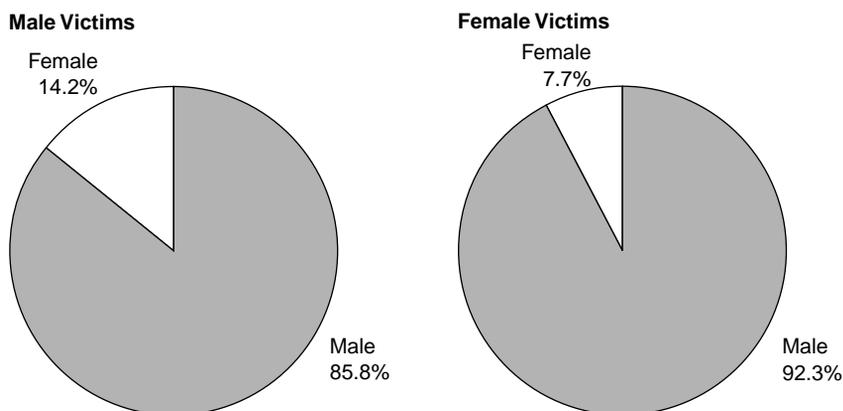
The findings so far suggest that the risk of homicide victimisation differs according to gender. That is, males are consistently at a higher risk of homicide victimisation than females. However, there are different stages during one's life cycle where the risk is relatively low and relatively high and where both males and females do not differ in their risk of homicide victimisation.

An analysis of victimisation rates based on both gender and age group reveals that both males and females under the age of 1 year are at a similar high risk of homicide victimisation. The risk then decreases quite markedly for both males and females to the age of 14, then increases dramatically between the ages of 15 to 23 years for females and 15 to 26 for males. The risk of victimisation for both males and females then peaks again between the ages of 30 to 32. After these ages, the risk of victimisation for males and females declines, although the decline is slower for females than for males (Figure 21 and Table 3).

It is interesting to note that females under the age of 1 year suffer the highest risk of homicide victimisation (average rate of 2.6 per 100,000 population)—although the rate for females between the ages of 21 to 23 years is also relatively high (average rate of 2.4). For males, the highest risk of homicide victimisation is between the ages of 24 to 26 years (average rate of 4.3). These findings are in accord with previous research that indicates young adults are the most frequent victims (see Foote 1999). Many have suggested that this may be related to the overall high violence rate among younger people (see Dietz 1987; Felson et al. 1984) and the fact that young people spend most of their time in contact with other young people (Massey and McKean 1985; Foote 1999). Overall, the median age for homicide victimisation for males is 33 and for females is 31 (Table 3).

Consistent with previous research (see Polk 1994a,b; Wallace 1986; James and Carcach 1997, Mouzos 1999), a high proportion of homicide is committed by male offenders. During the 10-year period under analysis, almost 9 out of 10 victims, irrespective of gender were killed by males. Twice as many male victims as female victims were killed by female offenders (Figure 22).

**Figure 22: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999:
Distribution of Victims According to Gender of Offenders**



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Racial Appearance

The race of both the homicide offender and the victim has been the focus of considerable research in the United States, especially the over-representation of African-American males as victims of violent death (Foote 1999; Holinger et al. 1987). More recently, Kellermann et al. (1993) in a study of homicide across a number of American communities found that African-Americans were more likely to be homicide victims (62%) than Whites (33%).

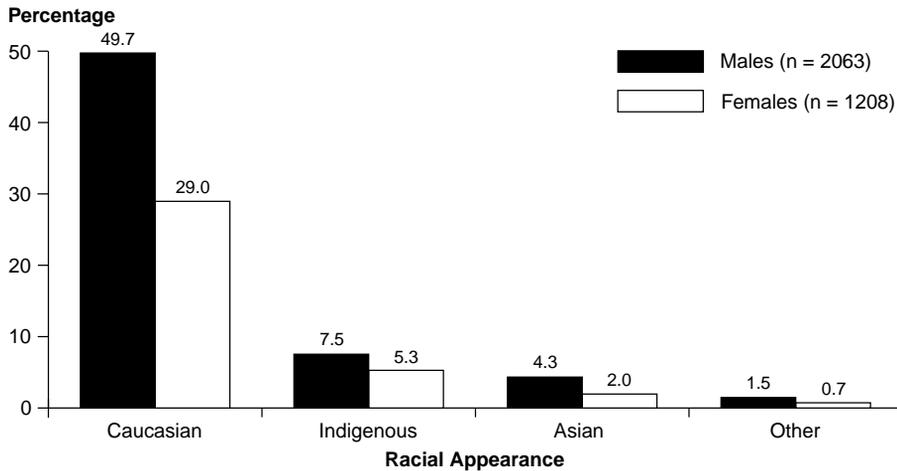
Similar to the findings relating to African-Americans, Indigenous²⁰ persons here in Australia are also over-represented as victims of homicide. On average, during the 10-year period, the homicide victimisation rate for Indigenous persons (where race was known) was 12.9 per 100,000 population, compared to an average rate of 1.6 per 100,000 population for non-Indigenous persons in Australia. This indicates that Indigenous persons were on average 8.1 times more likely to become victims of homicide than non-Indigenous persons.

Furthermore, approximately 2 per cent of the total Australian population are Indigenous, but Indigenous persons account for approximately 13 per cent

²⁰ For the purposes of the NHMP, the categories used to delineate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons is: Caucasian, Indigenous, Asian, and Other. It should be noted that these categories are not a perfect measure of ethnicity, or even race, as they are based on subjective assessments made by police and are, therefore, not immune from errors or inconsistencies. Also, as the determination of one's race is mainly based on the victim's external appearance, it is acknowledged that those who view themselves as Indigenous, even when their external appearance is that of a non-Indigenous person, may be, consequently, excluded from the Indigenous category and included in the Caucasian category.

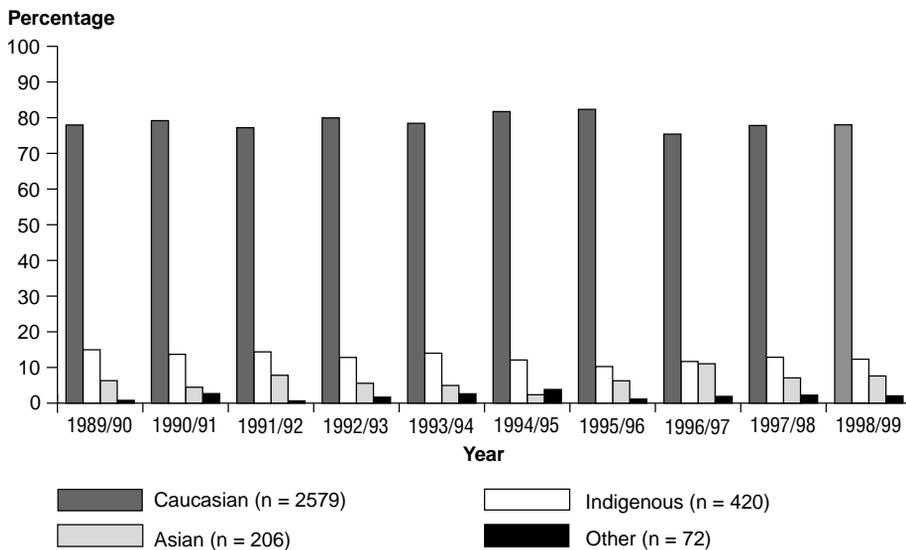
of the homicide victims (see Figure 23). This over-representation of Indigenous persons has remained relatively consistent over the past decade (Figure 24).

Figure 23: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Racial Appearance (n = 3,271)*



* Excludes 115 victims where racial appearance or gender was recorded as unknown or not stated.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 24: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Victims by Racial Appearance (n = 3,277)*



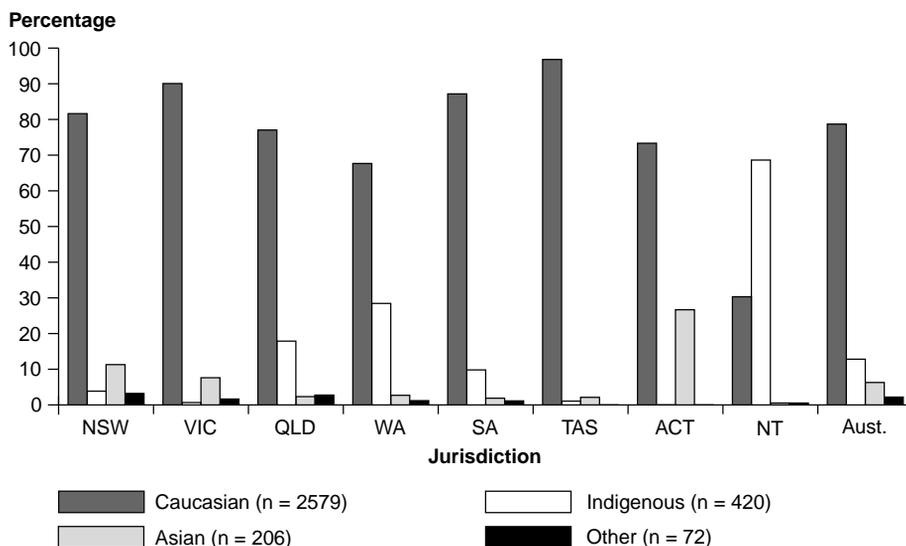
* Excludes 109 victims where racial appearance was recorded as unknown or not stated.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Higher risk of homicide victimisation is not only confined to Indigenous persons. In the last few years (1995/96 onwards), the proportion of Asian persons as victims of homicide also appears to be slightly increasing. For example, in 1996/97, approximately 11 per cent of homicide victims were of Asian appearance (where race was known). This declined to approximately 7 per cent in 1997/98 and 8 per cent in the most recent year—1998/99 (Figure 24).

A jurisdictional comparison reveals that the greater proportion of Indigenous homicides occurred in the Northern Territory (68.6%), followed by Western Australia (28.4%) and Queensland (17.9%) (Figure 25). Although this distribution pattern seems to follow the distribution of Indigenous persons in each respective state and territory, these findings suggest that Indigenous persons are over-represented as victims of homicide in each Australian state and territory, with the exception of Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

James and Carcach (1997) examined the possible contributing factors in the over-representation of Indigenous persons as victims of homicide, especially in the Northern Territory. They found that a high prevalence of alcohol

Figure 25: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: 1 July 1989–30 June 1999, Distribution of Homicide Victims by Racial Appearance and Jurisdiction (n = 3,277)*



* Excludes 109 victims where racial appearance was recorded as unknown or not stated.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

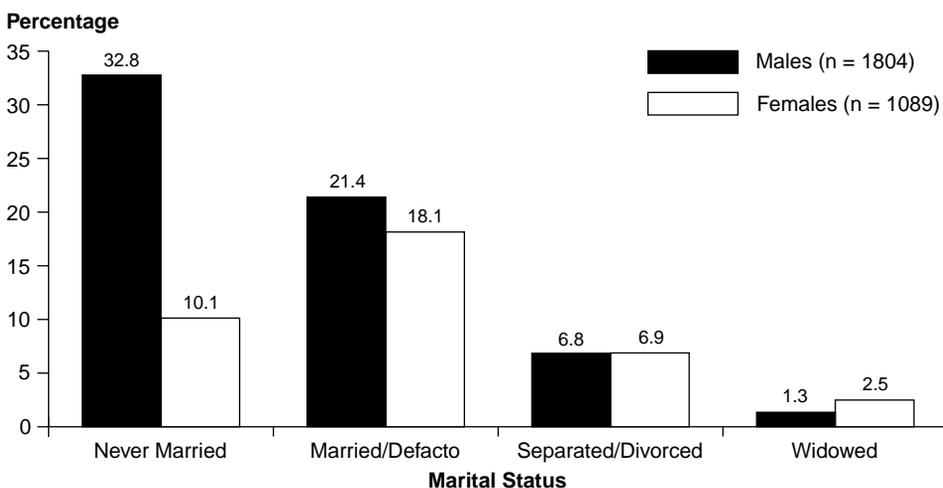
consumption was the primary factor underlying the high victimisation rates, rather than the number of Indigenous homicides (as the Northern Territory had the largest percentage of victims who were under the influence of alcohol).

Marital Status

Similar to other facets of homicide victimisation, the distribution of homicide victims according to gender and their marital status also shows marked differences. During the 10-year period, most victims who were male had never been married (32.8%), whereas most female victims were married or lived in a de-facto relationship (18.1%). A similar proportion of male and female victims were recorded as being separated (married or defacto) or divorced at the time of the incident (Figure 26).

These findings are consistent with previous research confirming the notion that for males marriage may serve as a form of social control that minimises their participation in activities where the risk of homicide victimisation is relatively high (Breault and Kposowa 1997). On the other hand, it appears that for females marriage or being in a defacto relationship seems to increase the risk of homicide victimisation—considering most women who are killed by men are killed by an intimate partner (Mouzos 1999).

Figure 26: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Marital Status (n = 2,893)*



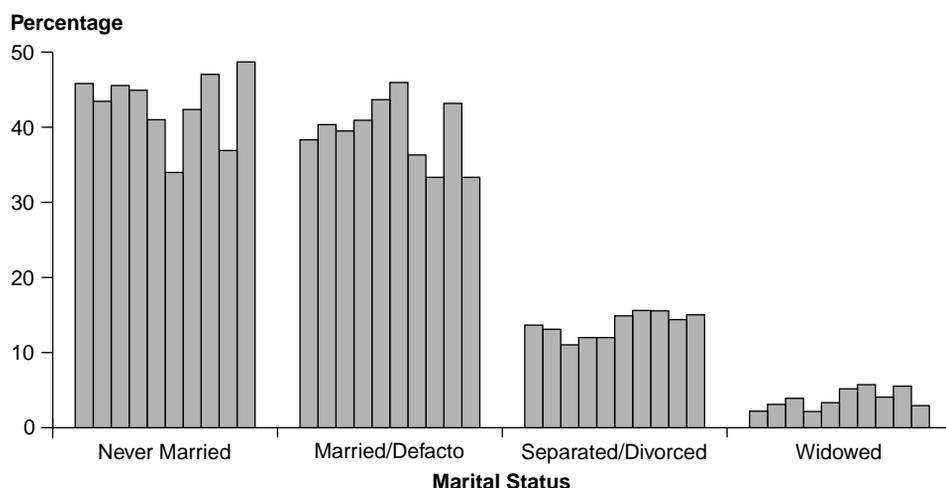
* Excludes 493 victims where marital status was recorded as unknown or not stated.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Despite year-to-year fluctuations, it appears that the distribution of victims according to marital status (where marital status was known) has remained relatively stable (Figure 27).

A separate analysis examined homicide victimisation based on gender and marital status for the most current year—1998/99. This analysis revealed that for both males and females, the highest rate of homicide victimisation was when they were separated or divorced (rate of 5.9 for males, rate of 3.5 for females) (Table 4). For females, this finding confirms previous research which suggests women who attempt to terminate their relationship are exposed to a relatively high risk of homicide, with the period immediately after the estrangement associated with particularly high risk (Wilson and Daly 1993).

Figure 27: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Marital Status (n = 2,893)*



* Excludes 493 victims where marital status was recorded as unknown or not stated.
Source: NHMP, AIC.

Table 4: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1998–30 June 1999: Homicide Victimization According to Gender and Marital Status (n = 306)*

Marital Status	Males		Females	
	Number	Rate**	Number	Rate**
Never Married	118	4.6	31	1.5
Married/Defacto	54	1.3	48	1.2
Separated/Divorced	27	5.9	19	3.5
Widowed	3	1.7	6	0.8

* Excludes 35 victims where marital status was recorded as unknown or not stated.

** Rate per 100,000 relevant population.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Alternatively, it could also be argued that for women who are separated or divorced, the relatively high risk of victimisation could indicate that these women are returning to a lifestyle similar to that prior to getting married or becoming involved in a defacto relationship. This may also explain the high risk experienced by separated/divorced men—they may be returning to a single lifestyle coupled with greater opportunities to engage in risky behaviour.

Employment Status

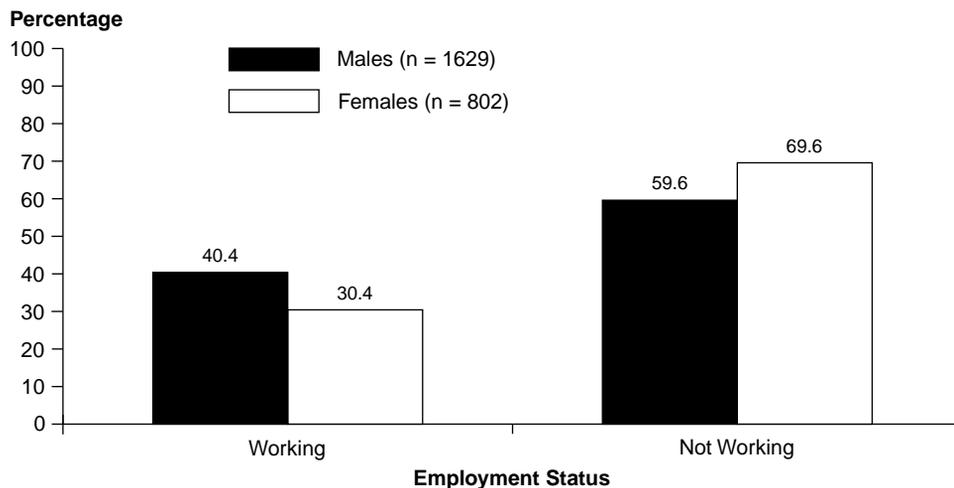
In a study of homicide in special populations (women, children, and the elderly), Goetting (1995) observed three consistent risk factors. The main risk factor was poverty. Research has shown a consistent positive relationship between poverty and homicide for both homicide offenders and homicide rates. Goetting (1995, pp. 155–56) found that

Poverty is a structural factor associated with the killing of friends and acquaintances, children, and spouses and with the robbery associated murders of strangers. All social-class indicators examined ... point to relative economic deprivation. The subjects of this research are characterised by low levels of formal education, high unemployment rates, and high rates of welfare dependency. The tentacles of poverty permeate the fabric of a social structure to produce agonies of multiple dimensions. Somewhere immersed in the quagmire of poverty's despair erupts the homicide seed.

Consistent with these findings, Wallace (1986) found that persons in the lowest socio-economic grade are over-represented amongst homicide offenders and victims. As expected, our data show that homicide victims, irrespective of gender, are also more likely to be not working²¹ at the time of the incident (Figure 28). Across the 10-year period, the proportion of victims of homicide who were not working at the time of the incident has consistently exceeded the proportion of victims who were engaged in some type of employment at the time of the incident (Figure 29).

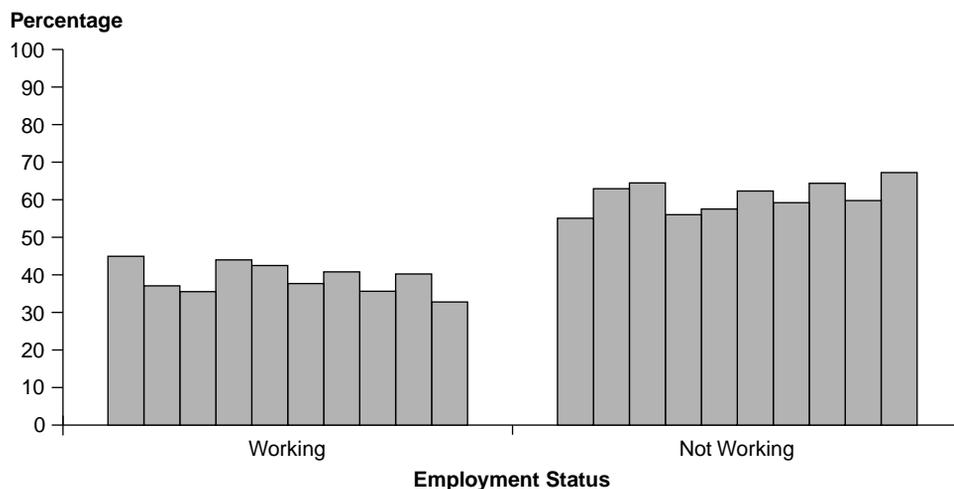
²¹ This analysis uses the categories “working” and “not working”, with the former including those victims who may have been either full-time or part-time employed, while the latter includes victims who are unemployed or not in the labour force (domestic duties or sole parent/disability/aged pensions).

Figure 28: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Employment Status (n = 2,431)*



* Excludes 955 where gender and employment status were not stated or unknown, and victims under the age of 15 years.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 29: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Employment Status (n = 2,431)*



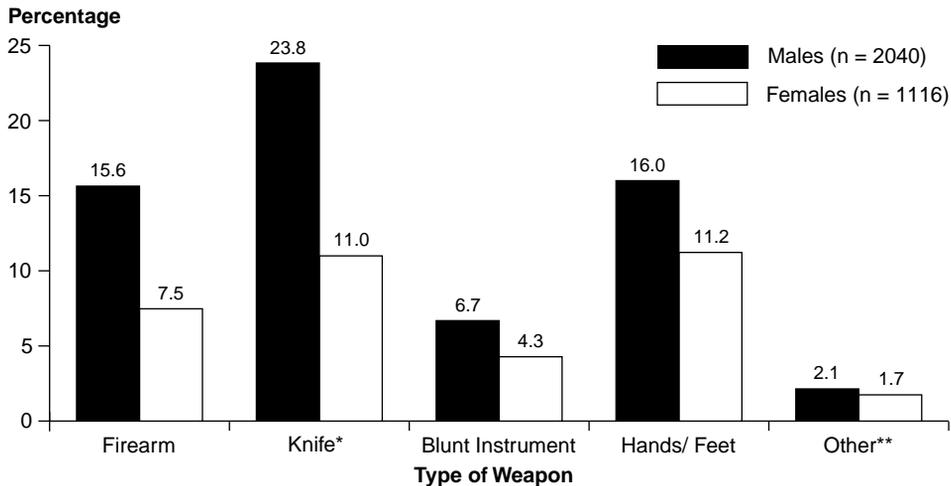
* Excludes 955 where employment status were not stated or unknown, and victims under the age of 15 years.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Type of Weapon Used to Kill the Victim

In the United States, over the last fifty years people who kill each other have been increasingly more likely to use firearms than other weapons (Foote 1999). In contrast, over a 10-year period in Australia, more victims (both male and female²²) were killed with a knife and other sharp instrument than other types of weapons (Figure 30), a pattern that has remained consistent year after year (Figure 31). A firearm was the third most common weapon used to kill and this was preceded by the use of assaultive force (hands and/or feet). In the most recent year—1998/99, 32.6 per cent (n = 111) of victims were killed with a knife and other sharp instrument. A further 26.7 per cent (n = 91) of victims were killed with assaultive force (hands, feet), 18.8 per cent (n = 64) were killed with a firearm, and 10.3 per cent (n = 35) of homicide victims were killed with a blunt instrument.

Note that in the most recent years (1996/97–1998/99), there has been a slight increase in the use of other weapons to commit homicide. This may be a result of an increased awareness or identification of the use of drugs (mostly, heroin “Hot Shot” injections or, in one specific case, the use of battery acid) by a third person to intentionally inject the victim with a lethal dose, or by

Figure 30: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Victims by Type of Weapon and Gender (n = 3,156)***



* Includes other sharp instrument.

** Other includes fire, poison (including carbon monoxide poisoning), explosives, drugs, motor vehicle, ligature, and other weapons.

*** Excludes 230 victims where gender and type of weapon was recorded as unknown or not stated.

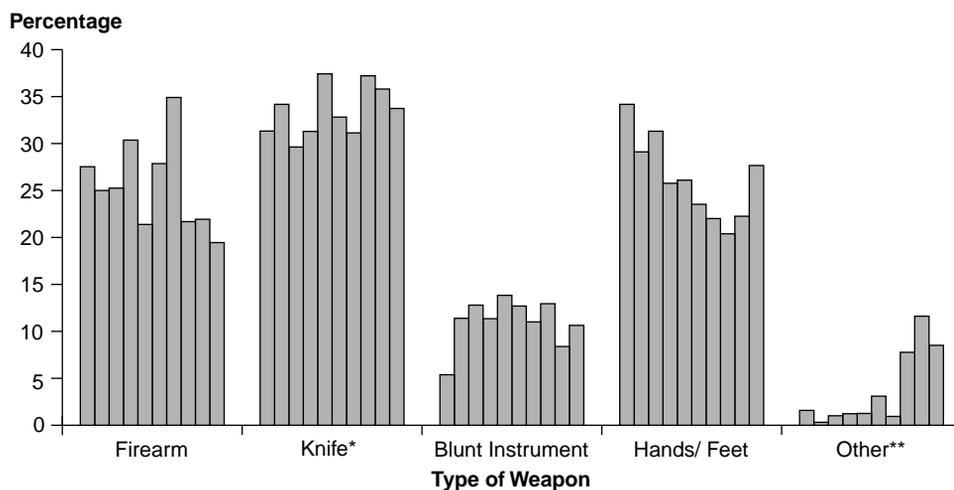
Source: NHMP, AIC.

²² However, it appears that hands/feet were as commonly used to kill female victims as a knife.

the provision of a drug in sufficient strength so that it was likely to cause death if injected. Similarly, this “other category” also includes those victims who died as a result of suffocation due to carbon monoxide poisoning. In recent years, there has been a slight increase in the use of a vehicle’s exhaust fumes as a lethal weapon to commit homicide.²³

The use of firearms to perpetrate homicide is not as prevalent in Australia as it is in the United States. Across the 10-year period, there were 808 victims of homicide who were killed with a firearm, with an average of 81 victims per year (average rate of firearm homicide is 0.45 per 100,000 population). As homicide is an infrequent phenomenon, especially firearm-related homicide, any slight increase can have a dramatic effect on the firearm-homicide victimisation rate for that particular year (Figure 32). For example, in 1992/93 mainly as a result of the Central Coast (New South Wales) massacre where 6 victims were killed, Australia recorded a firearm homicide victimisation rate of 0.56 per 100,000 population. Likewise in 1995/96 where 35 victims were killed at Port Arthur, the firearm homicide rate increased to 0.61 per 100,000 population, the highest recorded rate since the inception of the NHMP.

Figure 31: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Victims by Type of Weapon (n = 3,162)***



* Includes other sharp instrument.

** Other includes fire, poison (including carbon monoxide poisoning), explosives, drugs, motor vehicle, ligature, and other weapons.

*** Excludes 224 where type of weapon was unknown or not stated.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

²³ In Western Australia, there has been a recent spate of murder-suicides involving motor vehicle exhaust.

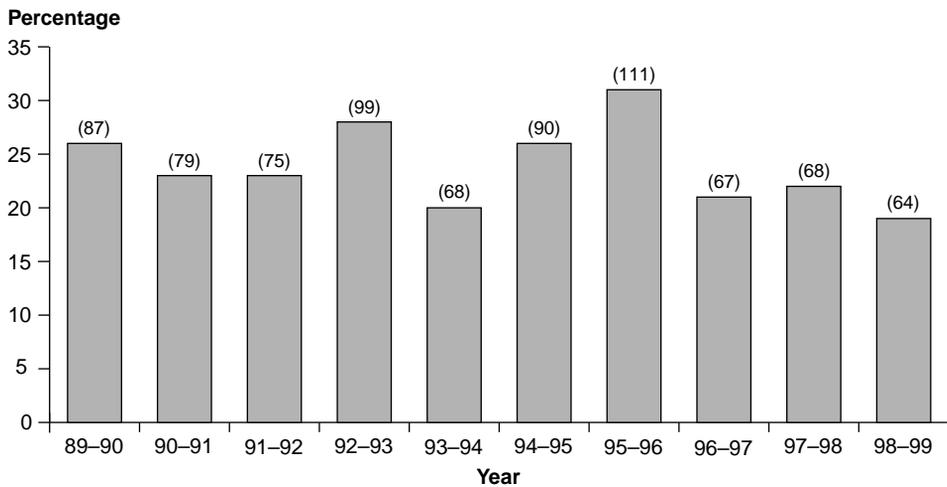
Overall, there appears to be a slight declining trend in the use of firearms to commit homicide in Australia (Figures 32 and 33).

Figure 32: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Firearm Homicide Victimization Rates per 100,000 Population



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 33: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Victims Killed by a Firearm (n = 808), as a Percentage of All Homicides (n = 3,386)

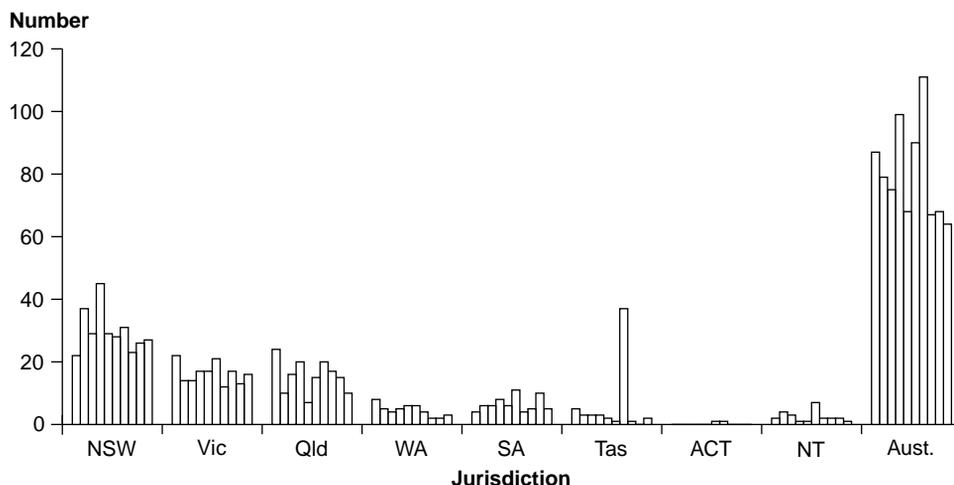


Number of victims killed with a firearm per year shown in brackets.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

As previously mentioned, the occurrence of multiple-victim homicide can significantly impact on the victimisation rate and victim tally for that particular year and jurisdiction. The most dramatic example is shown in Figure 34, where the effect of the 35 victims of Port Arthur on the victim tally for that year and jurisdiction is most evident.

Figure 34: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Number of Victims Killed with a Firearm by Jurisdiction



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Alleged Motive of the Killing

In addition to monitoring trends and patterns in the incidence of homicide, one of the main underlying aims of most homicide research is to determine and explain the reason for the act. However, this is a difficult task for a number of reasons. Most importantly, “the causes of some human social events may not be the same as the reasons those humans acted in the first place” (Rasche 1993, p. 77). As Daly and Wilson (1988) have observed:

The upshot is that the prevailing criminological conception of motives in homicide is a wholly [sic] amalgam of several potentially independent dimensions: spontaneity versus premeditation, the victim–offender relationship, and only a relatively small dose of those substantive issues that murder mystery writers and ordinary speakers of English mean when they speak of “the motive”. This unsatisfactory state of affairs exists partly because the popular conception of a motive is a primarily appropriate to premeditated murders, and not to the sort of reactive,

unplanned assaults that produce most homicides. In a murder mystery, the question of motive is “Why did Killer want Victim Dead?” In real life, Killer did not especially want Victim dead at all, or at least did not approach the conflict in those terms (p. 173).

There are certain types of homicides where the motive for the act is not always apparent or is truly unknown. This is more characteristic of homicide incidents that have occurred simply because of some altercation over a trivial matter or some homicides that involve children—it is difficult to determine the motive behind an offender who has delivered a fatal blow to baby. In one particular incident where a young child died of a fatal blow to abdomen that caused internal bleeding, the offender’s alleged motive was documented as being “poor parenting skills, drug addict withdrawing and that the offender couldn’t stand the crying child” (327/99).

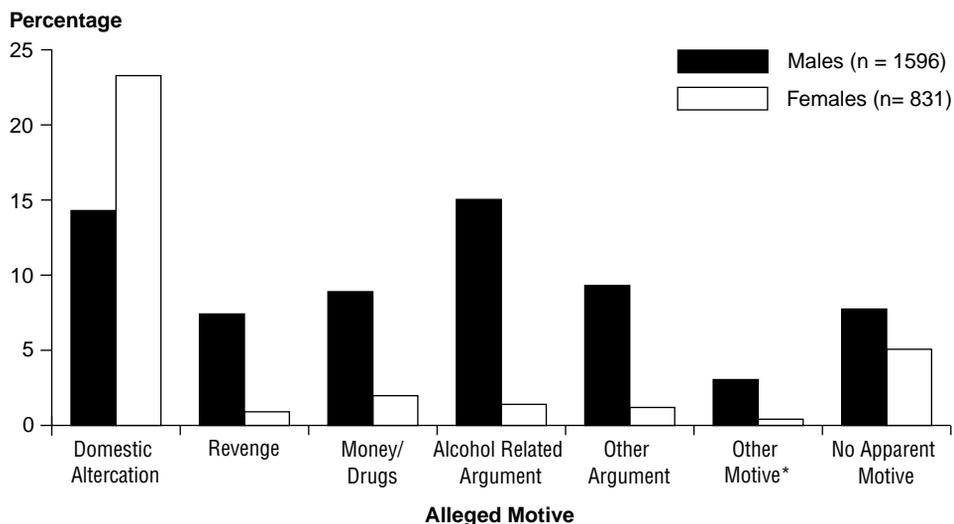
Nonetheless, it is still a useful exercise to examine the alleged motives of offenders and how they may differ according to the gender of the victim and whether there have been any changes over time.

It is widely accepted that there are distinct differences between the killing of men and women, and the motive is one aspect where gender differences are most apparent. Although males are more likely than women to be killed, the data suggest that when females are killed, they are most likely to be killed as a result of a domestic altercation.²⁴ On the other hand, when males are killed, they are most likely to be killed as a result of an alcohol-related argument (Figure 35).

On a yearly basis, motives for killing show marked variation (Figure 36). There have, however, been a number of changes in the most recent years in the distribution of victims according to the offender’s alleged motive. There appears to have been a slight decline in the percentage of victims killed as a result of a domestic altercation. There may be a number of possible explanations for such a decline, for example, declining domesticity and increased labour force participation for women if there was an observed decline in intimate partner homicides. However, as will be demonstrated later on, the decline in homicides arising from arguments of a domestic nature are most likely to be as a result of a decline in homicides between family members, and not intimate partners. These and other reasons will be explored below in the chapter “Homicidal Encounters”. It is possible that these changes could also be attributed to improvements in recording.

²⁴ Domestic altercation includes jealousy, desertion, or termination of a relationship and other domestic-related arguments.

Figure 35: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Alleged Motive (n = 2,427)**

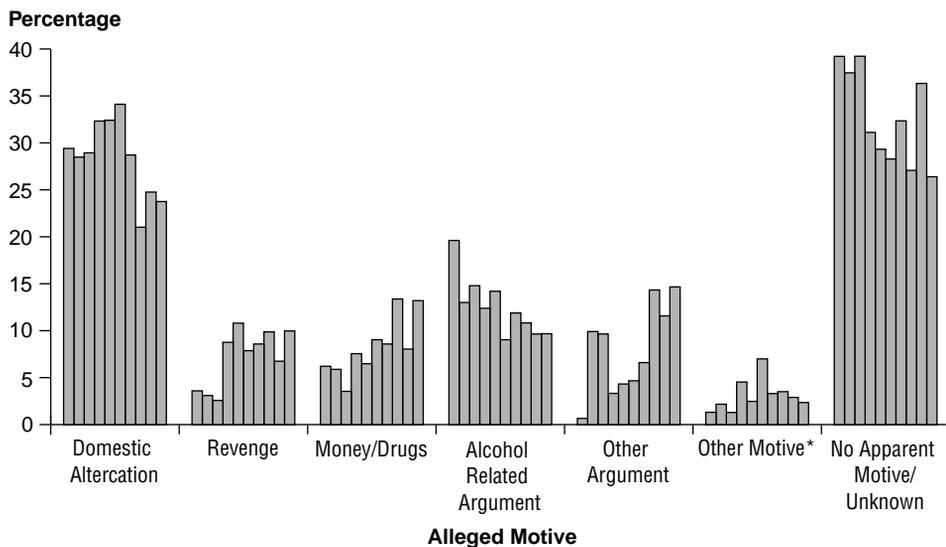


* Other motive includes racial/sexual vilification (hate crime), sexual gratification, envy, and other motives (deaths as a result of exorcisms).

** Excludes 959 victims where gender and alleged motive was unknown or not stated.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 36: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Alleged Motive (n = 3,207)**



* Other motive includes racial/sexual vilification (hate crime), sexual gratification, envy, and other motives (deaths as a result of exorcisms).

** Excludes 179 victims where details of the alleged motive were missing.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

In contrast, there also appears to be an increase in the proportion of victims killed as a result of some altercation surrounding the issue of money or drugs (9% in 1994/95 to 13% in 1998/99). This includes the recovery of bad debts, the elimination of competition in relation to drug territory, or some other argument where drugs or money were the cause.

However, it is also important not to disregard the possibility that some of the changes experienced are a function of improvements in NHMP recording practices.

Alcohol and/or Illicit/Prescription Drug Usage

According to many studies, the relationship between alcohol ingestion and homicide is well established (Foote 1999; Lester 1993; Pernanen 1991), although the causal link is not fully understood (Williams 1999). Research suggests that alcohol is almost never sufficient by itself to account for violence, but it is one of several factors that act in combination (individual, situational, and social/cultural influences) (Collins and Messerschmidt 1993).

Many studies have examined the pervasiveness of alcohol as a concomitant to homicidal violence. For example, Goodwin (1973) found that as many as 75 per cent of all homicide victims had alcohol in their systems at the time of death. Murdoch et al. (1990) reviewed studies and reported that as few as 2 per cent and as many as 70 per cent of homicide victims had been drinking prior to the incident, with most studies reporting that more than 40 per cent of the victims had been drinking. Similarly, the five studies reviewed by Pernanen (1991) reported that the percentage of victims who had consumed alcohol prior to the incident ranged from 47 to 68 per cent.

From 1989/90 to 1995/96 the NHMP collected data on use of alcohol and illicit/prescription drugs by the victim based on information available from police reports. This information was not consistently recorded by police and did not accurately reflect alcohol and illicit drug usage. For the period 1 July 1996 onwards (until most recently—1998/99), supplementary information was sought and obtained from Coroners files, in particular, from toxicology reports.²⁵ Due to a high proportion of cases where alcohol and illicit drug

²⁵ The use of toxicology reports to establish whether a victim was under the influence of alcohol may present problems when the body of the victim is located some time after the incident has occurred as any trace of alcohol may have disappeared from the system. Comparison of data on victim's alcohol consumption collected prior to 1996 with those obtained in 1996 and subsequent years may be difficult as any comparison would be based on the tenuous assumption of a high correlation between measures obtained from police reports and toxicology reports (Carcach and Conroy, 1999).

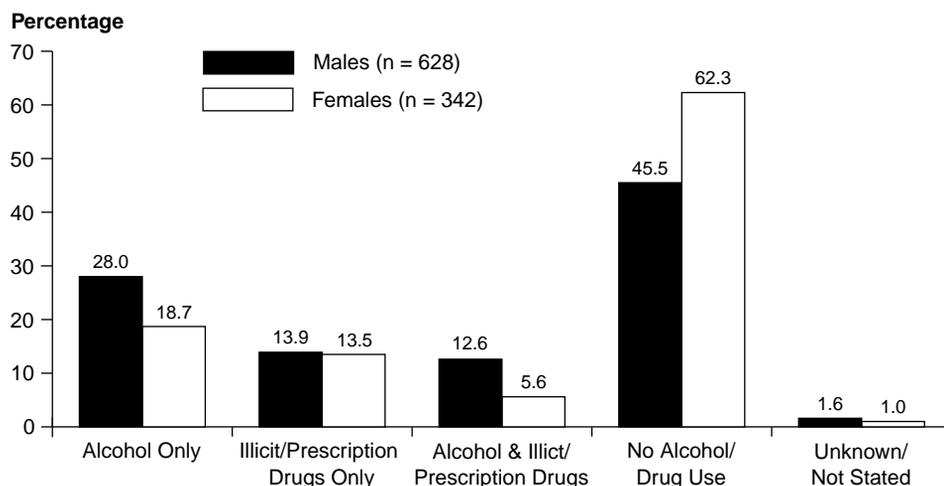
consumption was recorded as “unknown or not stated” for the years prior to 1996/96, the data collected for the earlier years were excluded from the following analysis, and focus only on the three most recent years where data were derived from toxicology reports.

Between 1996/97 and 1998/99, approximately 28 per cent of male victims and 19 per cent of female victims were under the influence of alcohol only, and approximately 14 per cent of male and female victims were under the influence of illicit/prescription²⁶ drugs at the time of the incident (Figure 37).

In contrast, almost 2 out of 3 female victims (62.3%) and 2 out of 4 male victims (45.5%) were not under the influence of alcohol or illicit/prescription drugs at the time of the incident.

However, it appears that over the 3-year period, the proportion of victims who were under the influence of illicit/prescription drugs has slightly increased (11.3% to 17.3% in 1998/99), whereas there has been a slight decline in the proportion of victims who had not consumed alcohol or taken

Figure 37: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1996–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Gender and Alcohol and Illicit/Prescription Drug Usage (n = 970)

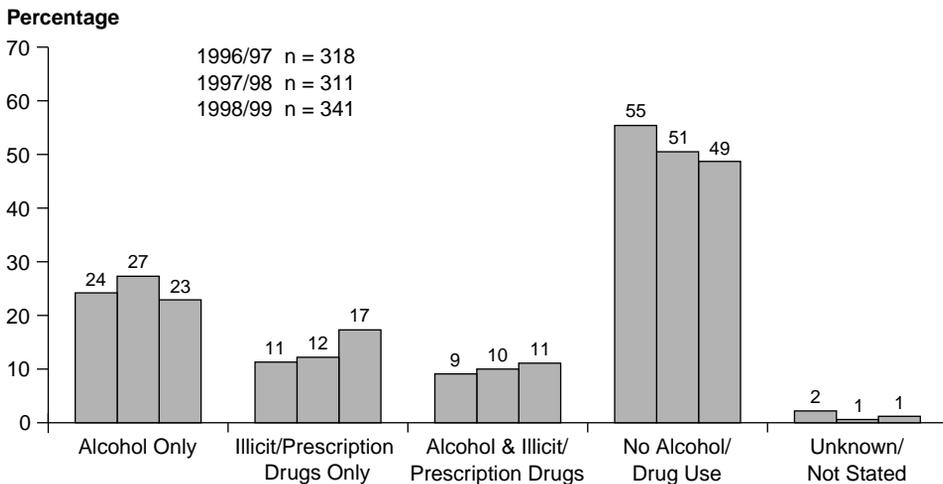


Source: NHMP, AIC.

²⁶ Based on NHMP data, it is not possible to infer whether these victims who had taken prescription drugs had done so for an illicit purpose or whether they had taken them because they were prescribed by a medical practitioner for an existing medical condition.

illicit/prescription drugs (55.4% to 48.7%) (Figure 38). These findings confirm those of the most recent National Drug Strategy Household Survey (1998) collected by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (see AIHW 1999a), which found that between 1995 and 1998 the proportion of the Australian population aged 14 years and over who had used drugs²⁷ over their lifetime increased from 39.3 per cent in 1995 to 46.0 per cent in 1998. Similarly, the proportion who had used recently (in the last 12 months) also increased from 17.0 per cent in 1995 to 22.0 per cent in 1998 (AIHW 1999a).

Figure 38: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1996–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Victims According to Alcohol and Illicit/Prescription Drug Usage (Total Victims = 970)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

²⁷ This includes marijuana/cannabis, analgesics, tranquilisers, steroids, barbiturates, amphetamines (for non-medical purposes), inhalants, heroin, methadone, cocaine, hallucinogens, ecstasy, and designer drugs.

Ten-Year Summary—Victim Profile

During the period from 1 July 1989–30 June 1999:

- Homicide victimisation rates fluctuated between 1.7 and 2.0 per 100,000 population.
- The Northern Territory consistently recorded the highest victimisation rate.
- There has been a stable pattern of gender differentiation, with a ratio of 3 males killed for every 2 females.
- The highest age-specific victimisation rate for females was for children less than 1 year (average rate of 2.6), whereas the highest victimisation rate for males was for young men between the ages of 24 and 26 years (average rate of 4.3).
- 86 out of 100 male victims and 92 out of 100 female victims were killed by a male offender.
- Indigenous persons are on average 8.1 times more likely than non-Indigenous persons to become victims of homicide.
- Male victims were more likely to have been single at the time of the incident, whereas female victims were more likely to have been married or living in a defacto relationship.
- Both male and female victims were more likely to be not working at the time of the incident.
- Victims of homicide were more likely to be killed with a knife or other sharp instrument than any other weapon.
- There was a declining trend in the proportion of victims killed with a firearm.
- Females were more likely to be killed as a result of a domestic altercation, although the proportion has declined in recent years.
- Males were more likely to be killed following an alcohol-related argument.
- Two out of 3 female victims and 2 out of 4 male victims were *not* under the influence of alcohol or illicit/prescription drugs at the time of the incident.

Offender Characteristics

The act of homicide has been described as “a drama played out by at least two actors” (Foote 1999). When we focus our attention on only 1 actor—the victim—we run the risk of failing to understand what the drama is about. The previous section examined the characteristics of victims of homicide and whether these characteristics have remained stable across a 10-year period. This section will examine the second actor in the drama—the offender, and the characteristics of offenders over the 10-year period. As with the previous section on victims of homicide, this section will specifically focus on examining whether the characteristics of offenders have remained stable over time. For clarification purposes, the NHMP offender dataset relates to persons charged with the offence of murder or manslaughter (excluding whilst driving). It must also be noted that a proportion of these offenders will never face trial due to insufficient evidence and, similarly, others have been or will be acquitted in the trial process.

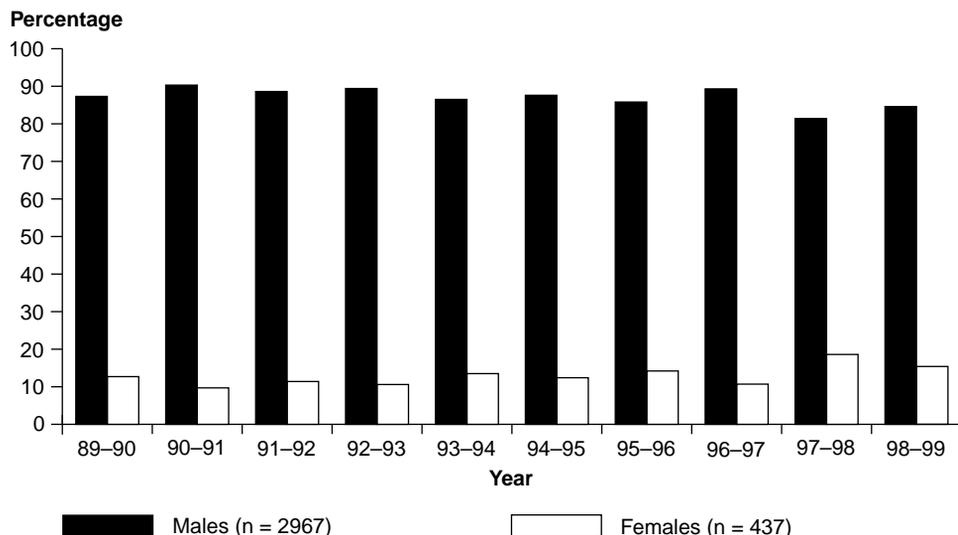
Trends in Offending

Between 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999, there were 3481 offenders identified by the police in relation to the 3150 homicide incidents. In approximately 11 per cent of these incidents (n = 347), no offender has been identified.

Gender and Age

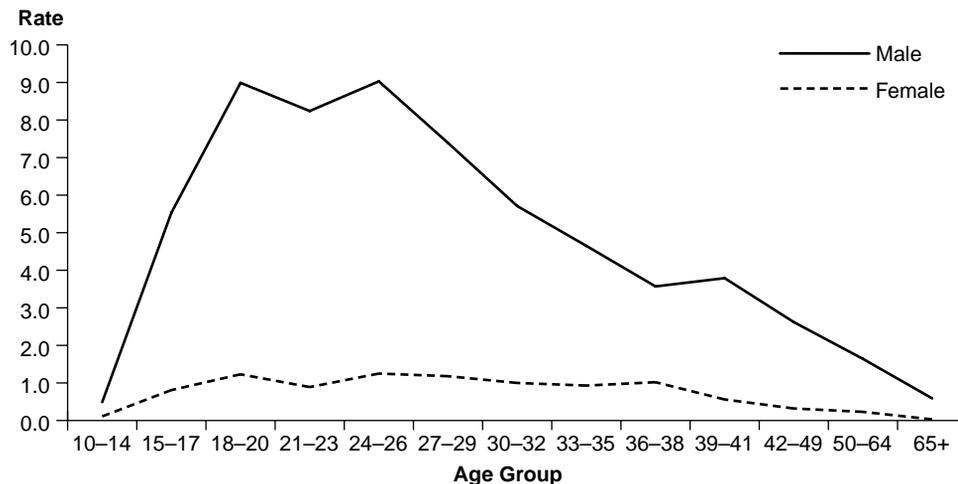
Studies have consistently found a dominance of male offending in homicide (Wolfgang 1958; Daly and Wilson 1988; Silverman and Kennedy 1993; Wallace 1986, only to name a few). Seven out of 8 homicide offenders are male (Figure 39). During the 10-year period, 12.8 per cent of homicide offenders (where gender was known) were female. It is interesting to note that from 1989/90 to 1995/96, James and Carcach (1997) reported that women offend in only 1 out of 10 incidents (p. 39). It appears that during the last three years (1996/97–1998/99), the proportion of homicide offenders who were female has increased slightly from 12.1 per cent (1989/90–1995/96) to 14.7 per cent (1996/97–1998/99). However, this increase in the number of females offending may not necessarily mean that more females are committing homicide *per se*. Rather, it may indicate that a higher proportion of females are being apprehended than are males, considering females are more likely to kill an intimate partner, or to a lesser extent, their children (James and Carcach 1997).

Figure 39: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender (n = 3,404)*



* Excludes 77 offenders where gender was unknown or not stated.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 40: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Offending Rates per 100,000 Relevant Population, by Gender and Age Group



Source: NHMP, AIC.

In addition to gender differences in homicide offending, there are also a number of differences when the age of homicide offenders is examined (Figure 40). Between the ages of 18 and 26, the ratio of male and female offending rates is approximately 9:1. It appears that after the age of 26 years, the rate of males offending decreases more substantially than female rates until the age of 36–38 years, and when the male offending rates increase again slightly until the age of 41 years. In comparison, female offending rates begin to decrease until the age of 33–35 years, but they increase again slightly between the ages of 36–38 years. After the age of 65, both male (rate of 0.59) and female (rate of 0.03) offending rates are relatively low.

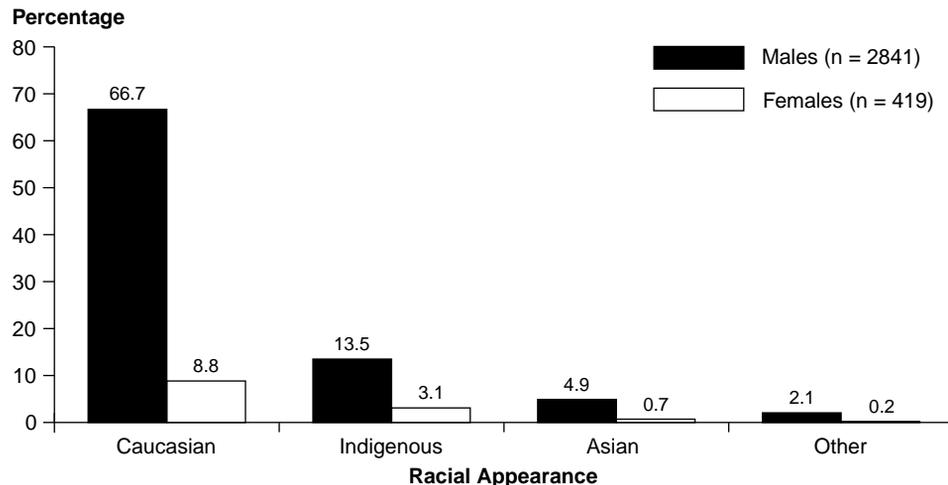
The median age of male offenders was 27 years, for female offenders the median age was 29 years, and for all offenders the median age was 28 years. In comparison to previous reported figures (see James and Carcach 1997, p. 41), it appears that the median age of offenders (males, females, and all offenders) has decreased slightly. For example, between 1989/90 and 1995/96, the median age of male offenders was 30 years, for females the median age was 31, and for all offenders the median age was 30 years.

According to Australian correctional data, the median age at admission for offenders of homicide in 1998 was 28 years for males and 30 years for females (Grant and Carcach 2000). However, it should be noted that *not all* offenders of homicide are sentenced to imprisonment. Some offenders due to mental illness may be found not fit to stand trial or to have been insane, therefore requiring admission into a psychiatric institution. Also, those offenders who committed suicide or died prior to, or after, apprehension would be excluded from correctional census data (Donnelly et al. 1995).

Given that the prison population is ageing as demonstrated both by age at admission and age at census date²⁸ (see Grant and Carcach 2000), this would suggest that the age of offenders coming into contact with the Australian criminal justice system is increasing. However, the present study reports a decrease in the median age of homicide offenders. This finding seems to correspond with research in the United States which detects a downward drift in age among a variety of criminal offenders, especially those responsible for violent offences (Smith and Feiler 1995). Such changes in the demographic composition of both prison populations and persons charged with homicide are noteworthy and will require closer monitoring over time.

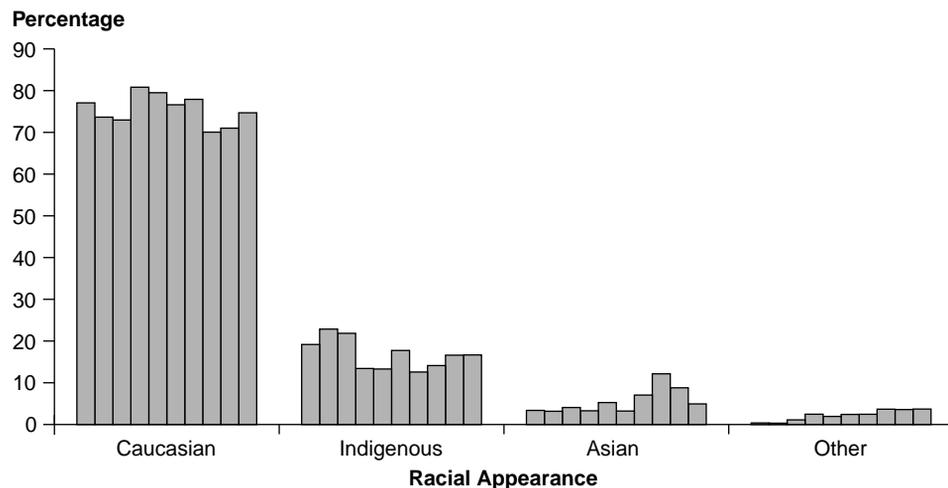
²⁸ Research suggests that the median age of the Australian prison population has increased by three years over the 1984–1998 period (Carcach and Grant 1999).

Figure 41: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Racial Appearance (n = 3,260)*



* Excludes 221 offenders, where gender and racial appearance were unknown or not stated.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 42: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Racial Appearance (n = 3,260)*



* Excludes 221 offenders, where gender and racial appearance were unknown or not stated.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Racial Appearance

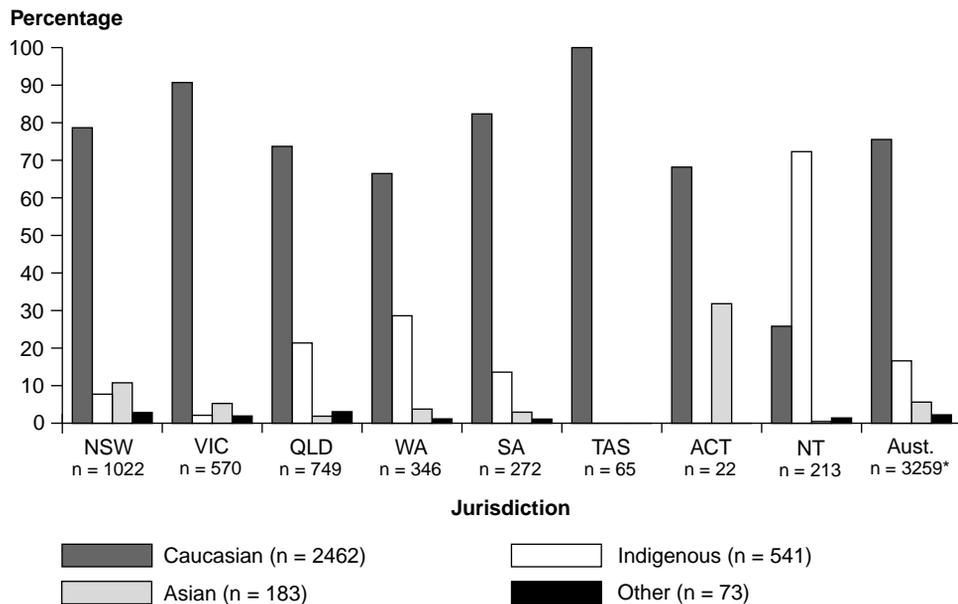
As with the section that examined the racial appearance of homicide victims, caution should be exercised when interpreting the following findings as the categories of racial appearance used by the NHMP do not accurately reflect the ethnicity of the offender, but rather they point to racial appearance which has been subjectively determined by police. It is, therefore, important to reiterate that racial appearance is not a perfect measure of ethnicity or even race.

When the distribution of homicide offenders according to gender and racial appearance (where it was known) is examined, it appears that a majority of offenders are Caucasian (75.5%), as is the case with homicide victims. Asian persons, who accounted for just over 5 per cent of the total Australian population (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) 1999), are slightly over-represented as homicide offenders—accounting for approximately 6 per cent of homicide offenders (Figure 41). It appears that the proportion of Asian homicide offenders has increased slightly in the last 4 years (see Figure 42).

This analysis also reveals that Indigenous persons are not only over-represented as victims of homicide, they are also over-represented as offenders of homicide as well (Figures 41 and 42). Indigenous persons accounted for 16.6 per cent (male 13.5%; female 3.1%) of homicide offenders, although they account for just under 2 per cent of the total Australian population. In the most recent years (1997/98–1998/99), the proportion of Indigenous homicide offenders has stabilised at around 17 per cent (Figure 41). Another noteworthy feature of the distribution of homicide offenders according to gender and racial appearance is that of the Caucasian offenders ($n = 2,462$), where females account for approximately 12 per cent ($n = 288$). In comparison, of the Indigenous offenders ($n = 541$), females account for approximately 19 per cent ($n = 101$).

Jurisdictional comparisons also indicate that Indigenous persons are over-represented as homicide offenders in all Australian states and territories, except for Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory (Figure 43). In the Northern Territory, Indigenous persons account for approximately 27 per cent of the total population, although they account for approximately 73 per cent of homicide offenders. In Western Australia, Indigenous persons account for 3.1 per cent of the total population and for 28.6 per cent of homicide offenders.

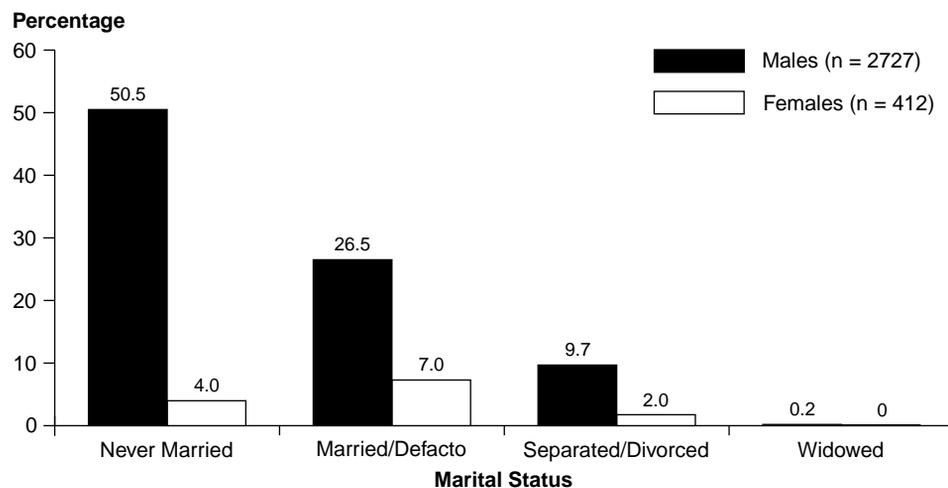
Figure 43: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Racial Appearance and Jurisdiction



* Excludes 222 offenders where gender and racial appearance were unknown or not stated.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 44: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Marital Status (n = 3,139)*



* Excludes 342 offenders where gender and marital status were unknown or not stated.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

As previously mentioned, Asian persons are also slightly over-represented as offenders of homicide. Approximately 11 per cent of homicide offenders in New South Wales are Asian, although Asian persons²⁹ account for 3.1 per cent of the total population in New South Wales (DIMA 1999).

Marital Status

Given that a majority of male victims of homicide were single, and that homicide occurs predominantly between male offenders and male victims (Polk 1994a,b; James and Carcach 1997; Daly and Wilson 1988), we would also expect that a majority of male offenders would be single. An analysis of the distribution of homicide offenders according to gender and marital status confirms our expectations (Figure 44). Approximately 51 per cent of all homicide offenders were single males.

Given what we already know about who are most likely to be victims of female homicide offenders—that is, current or former partners, it is not surprising that a majority of female offenders during the 10-year period under review were married or living in a defacto relationship (Figure 44).

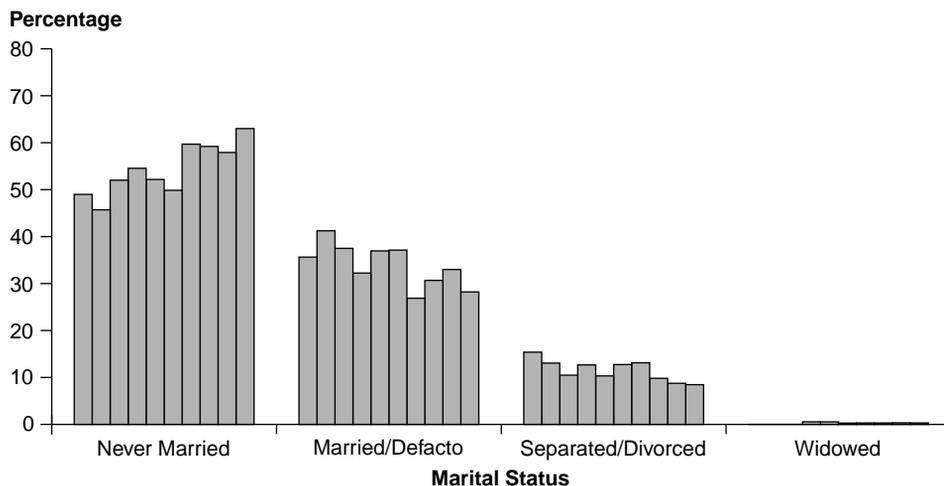
Between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, the proportion of homicide offenders who were single at the time of the incident has increased gradually (Figure 45). In 1989/90, approximately 49 per cent of homicide offenders were reported to be single, whereas in 1998/99, approximately 63 per cent of offenders were single. The proportion of homicide offenders who were married or were living in a defacto relationship has decreased from 35.6 per cent in 1989/90 to 28.2 per cent in 1998/99 (Figure 45).

Employment Status

Research suggests that homicide most often occurs amongst those who belong to what can be described as the under-class of Australian society (James and Carcach 1997). In the previous section, we found that a majority of victims of homicide were not working at the time of the incident. An examination of the distribution of homicide offenders based on gender and employment status indicates that likewise a majority of homicide offenders were also not working at the time of the incident (Figure 46). During the period from 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, almost three-quarters of male offenders and just under 9 out of 10 female offenders were not working at the time of the incident.

²⁹ This refers to persons born in the Philippines, Vietnam, and China.

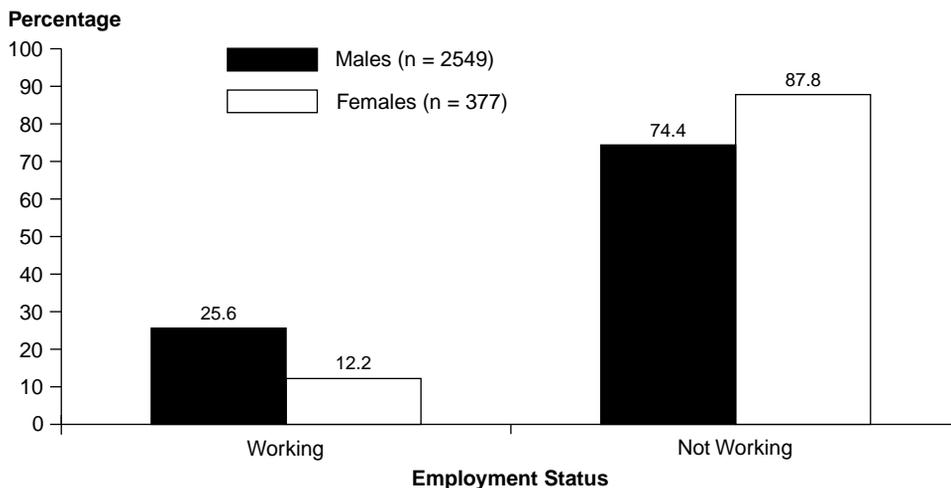
Figure 45: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Marital Status (n = 3,139)*



* Excludes 342 offenders where gender and marital status were unknown or not stated.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 46: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Employment Status (n = 2,926)*



* Excludes 555 offenders, where gender, employment status were unknown or not stated, those offenders who committed the offence in a correctional facility, and offenders under the age of 15 years.

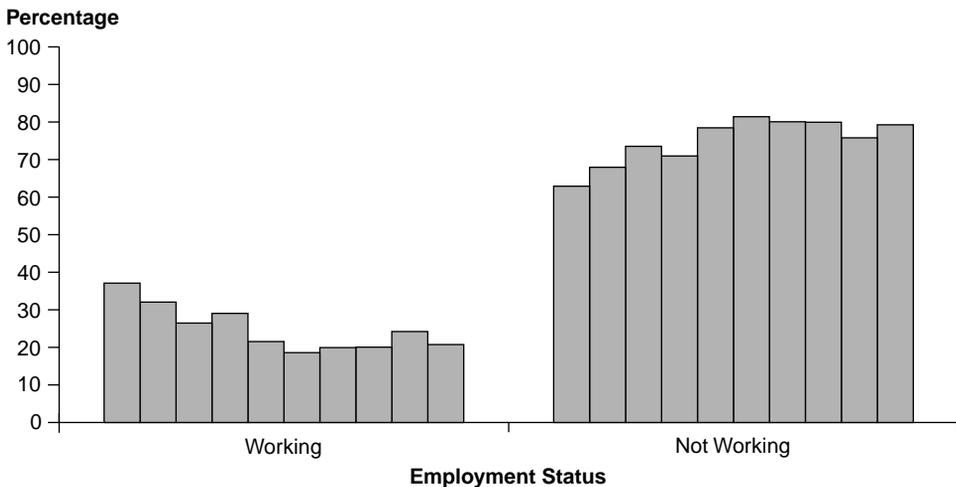
Source: NHMP, AIC.

Polk (1994a, p. 206) describes how those with fewer resources available to them may participate in situations where homicide is most likely to occur:

... males who experience extreme economic marginality, with their ties to conventional society grossly attenuated, are more open to taking exceptional physical risks. Such males are willing to expose others, and themselves, to the danger of lethal violence ... In the form of homicide termed here “conflict resolution on the margins”, males who are at the far boundaries of society, when they become embroiled in heated conflict with a friend (also a member of the under class), may feel that they have little recourse but to engage in physical violence as a way of settling the competitive battle.

From 1989/90 until 1992/93, the proportion of homicide offenders who were not working at the time of the incident has slightly increased, and thereafter stabilised at a level under 80 per cent (Figure 47).

Figure 47: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Employment Status (n = 2,942)*



* Excludes 539 offenders where employment status was unknown or not stated, those offenders who committed the offence in a correctional facility, and offenders under the age of 15 years.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

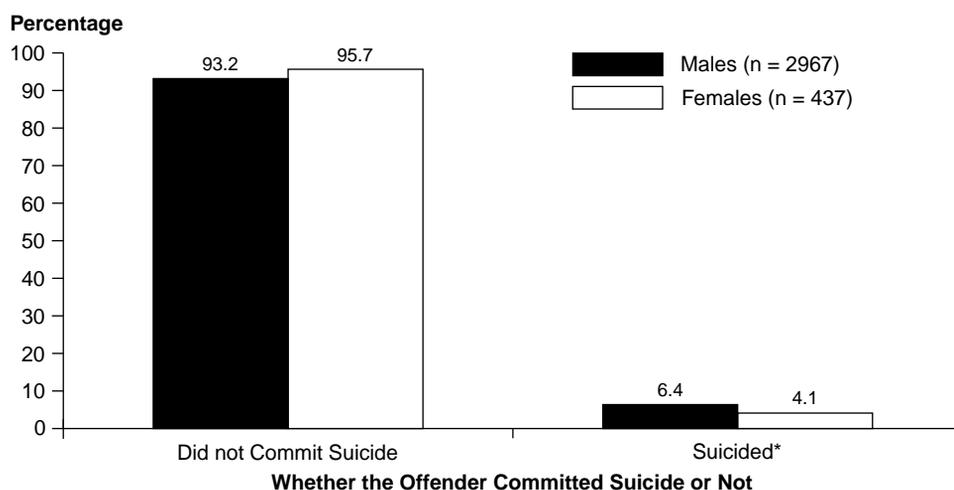
Injury or Death of the Offender

The NHMP also records information pertaining to whether the offender was injured or killed during or following the homicide incident. During the 10-year period under review, approximately 6 per cent of male offenders (n = 189) and approximately 4 per cent of female offenders (n = 18) committed suicide during or following the homicide incident (Figure 48). In addition, 6 offenders died as a result of legal intervention and 2 other offenders died from natural causes.

Overall, approximately 6 per cent of homicide offenders in Australia committed suicide during or following the homicide incident. Internationally, it appears that the proportion of homicide offenders who commit suicide varies markedly from country to country: 4 per cent in the United States (West 1965 cited in Abramsky and Helfman 1999); 5 per cent in Hong Kong (Wong and Singer 1973); 8 per cent in Finland (Virkkunen 1974); 16 per cent in Iceland (Hansen and Bjarnason 1974); 5 per cent in Great Britain (Home Office 1998); and 42 per cent in Denmark (West 1966).

Moreover, in Australia, a further 2 per cent (n = 64) of homicide offenders who were injured during or following the homicide incident were recorded as receiving their injuries from “attempting suicide” or “self-inflicted short

Figure 48: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Whether they Committed Suicide (n = 3,404)**



* Includes offenders who committed suicide during or following the homicide.

** Excludes 77 offenders, where gender was unknown or not stated.

of suicide attempt". As expected, a majority of offenders who were injured were males (81.3%). It should also be noted that 38 offenders were injured by some other means. This may include injuries inflicted by the victim, or by legal intervention, usually whilst being apprehended by police.

Alcohol and/or Illicit/Prescription Drug Usage

In the last decade, research has begun to focus on the relationship between alcohol, drugs, and homicide. However, it has been noted that many of these studies have failed to include other factors that are bound to have some impact on the relationship between these phenomena (Parker and Auerhahn 1999).

One empirical study that examined the relationship between drugs and homicide was the "Drug Relationships in Murder Project" (DREIM) (Spunt et al. 1994; Spunt et al. 1995). This study involved extensive interview with 268 homicide offenders incarcerated in New York State correctional facilities. This study revealed that the substance most likely to be used by homicide offenders on a regular basis as well as during the 24 hours directly preceding the crime was, overwhelmingly, alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine, respectively.

In addition, the study further reported that overall 86 per cent of homicide offenders who were experiencing drug effects (in most cases, this was intoxication but included "coming down from" and "in need of" a drug) at the time of the incident believed that the homicide was related to their drug use (Spunt et al. 1994, 1995).

We are not attempting to examine the relationship between alcohol, illicit/prescription drugs and homicide, but rather simply stating the proportion of victims and offenders who were under the influence of alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drugs at the time of the homicide incident. From NHMP data we cannot definitively determine whether the homicide was directly related to the offender's intoxication, all we can do is state whether they were under the influence during the time of the incident.

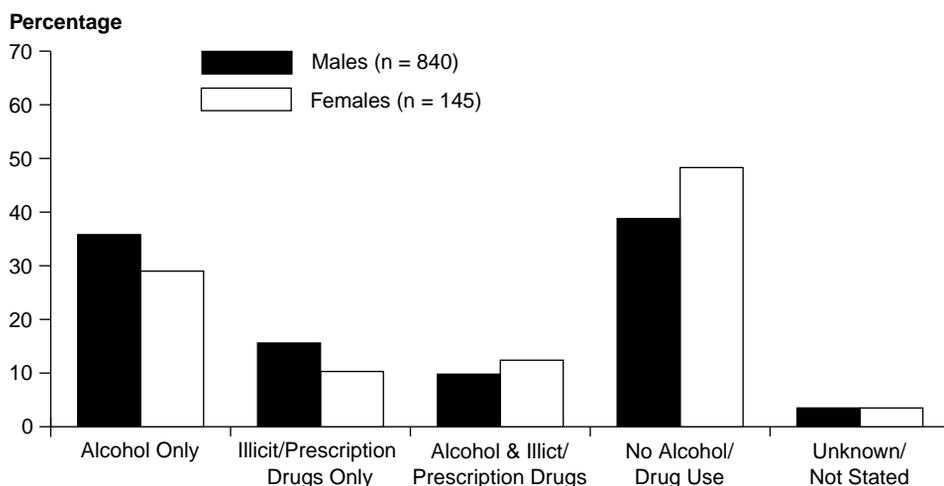
For purposes of consistency, the following analysis was based on the years 1996/97, 1997/98, and 1998/99. During this time period, approximately 36 per cent of male offenders and 29 per cent of female offenders were under the influence of alcohol only at the time of the incident (Figure 49).

Furthermore, a slightly greater proportion of female offenders (12.4%) were under the influence of both alcohol and illicit/prescription drugs at the time

of the incident. Research suggests that drugs and alcohol play a more significant role in female-perpetrated intimate homicide than in other types of homicides committed by women (Parker and Auerhahn 1999).

In comparison to victims of homicide, it appears that offenders are more likely to have consumed alcohol and or illicit drugs at the time of the incident (see Figures 38 and 49).

Figure 49: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1996–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Offenders According to Gender and Alcohol and/or Illicit Prescription Drug Usage (n = 985)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Ten-Year Summary—Offender Profile

During the period from 1 July 1989–30 June 1999:

- Seven out of 8 offenders were male.
- Males consistently exhibited higher rates of offending than females, with a ratio of about 7:1.
- The median age of male offenders was 27 years and the median age for female offenders was 29 years.
- Three-quarters of the offenders were Caucasian, although the proportion of Asian offenders has increased slightly.
- Male offenders were more likely to be single, whereas female offenders were more likely to be married or living in a defacto relationship at the time of the incident.
- Just over 7 out of 10 male offenders and just under 9 out of 10 female offenders were not working at the time of the incident.
- Approximately 6 per cent of offenders committed suicide during or after the homicide incident.
- Homicide offenders are more likely than victims of homicide to be under the influence of alcohol and/or prescription/illicit drugs at the time of the incident.

Victim–Offender Relationships

The previous three sections examined trends and patterns in incident, victim, and offender characteristics over a 10-year period. This section will examine an important dimension of homicide—the social relationship between the victim and the offender, with the aim of determining whether there has been any variation in these relationships over time.

In recent years, there is a general consensus regarding writings on homicide. Regardless of the classification system followed, writers consistently consider the victim–offender relationship to be of paramount importance (Riedel and Zahn 1985; Wolfgang 1958; Palmer and Humphrey 1980; Decker 1993, Silverman and Kennedy 1987; Cooney 1994). In simple terms, homicide can be described as a lethal interaction between at the very least 2 persons—the victim and the offender. However, without actually considering the social relationship between the 2 “actors”, we cannot begin to fully comprehend the dynamics which led to the homicide occurring, given that there are many different paths that lead to homicide victimisation and offending.

Types of Victim–Offender Relationships

Research that has examined victim–offender relationships in homicide has either characterised this relationship as a dichotomy, either as strangers or non-strangers (Mesner and Tardiff 1985; Sampson 1987) or as primary or secondary relationships (Parker and Smith 1979; Smith and Parker 1980). The latter classifies primary relationships as those between intimates (relatives, lovers, and friends), and secondary relationships as those that involve persons with no prior relationship.

Others (Silverman and Kennedy 1987; Smith and Stanko 1998) conceptualise the social relationship between the victim and the offender in terms of their social distance from one another by referring to victim–offender relationships as maps of “relational space”, wherein offenders and victims interact.

Acknowledging the limiting effects of relying upon a dichotomy classification scheme of victim–offender relationships, and considering the NHMP data set includes information on some 26 different types of

victim–offender relationships, the following analyses will focus specifically on the following:

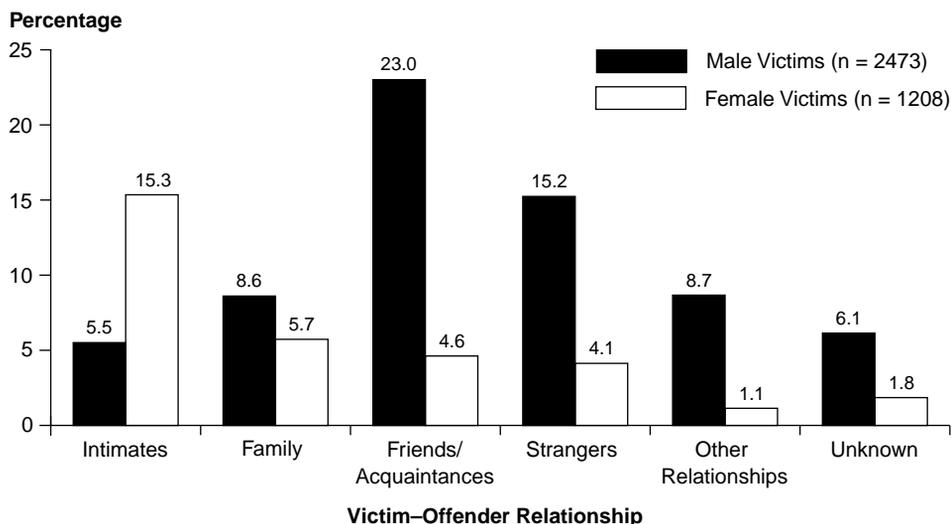
- Intimates.
- Family.
- Friends and Acquaintances.
- Strangers.
- Other Relationships.
- An “Unknown” category.

The relational category of *Intimates* primarily includes spouses, ex-spouses, persons in current or former defacto relationships, current or former boy/girlfriends, extra-marital lovers or partners/former partners of same-sex relationships. Those victim–offender relationships characterised as *Family* includes, sons, daughters (including step-child), parents (including step-parent, custodial and non-custodial), grandparents, siblings (including step-sibling) and other family relationships. The third relational category of *Friends/Acquaintances* includes close friends and acquaintances (including a neighbour). The fourth relational category of *Strangers* includes those victim–offender relationships in which the victim is relatively unknown to the offender at the time of the incident.

Other relationships include sex rivals, gang members, prostitute-client, fellow inmates in a correctional facility/mental health care facility, business relationships, and where the victim and the offender are known to each other but the type of relationship is unknown. In the final category of *Unknown* the victim–offender relationship has yet to be determined by police. Decker (1993) reports that the role of “unknown” relationships is also significant, mainly because “unknown” relationships account for rather substantial proportions of the total. Maxfield (1989) reported that 29 per cent of victim–offender relationships were “unknown”. Similarly, Cook (1987) reported that 34 per cent of robbery murders and 11 per cent of non-felony homicides in the United States consisted of “unknown” relationships.

In Australia, during the period 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999, female victims were most likely to be killed by an intimate partner (Figure 50). In contrast, male victims were more likely to be killed by a friend or an acquaintance. Similarly, male victims were more likely than female victims to be killed by a stranger (Figure 50). These findings confirm previous research which

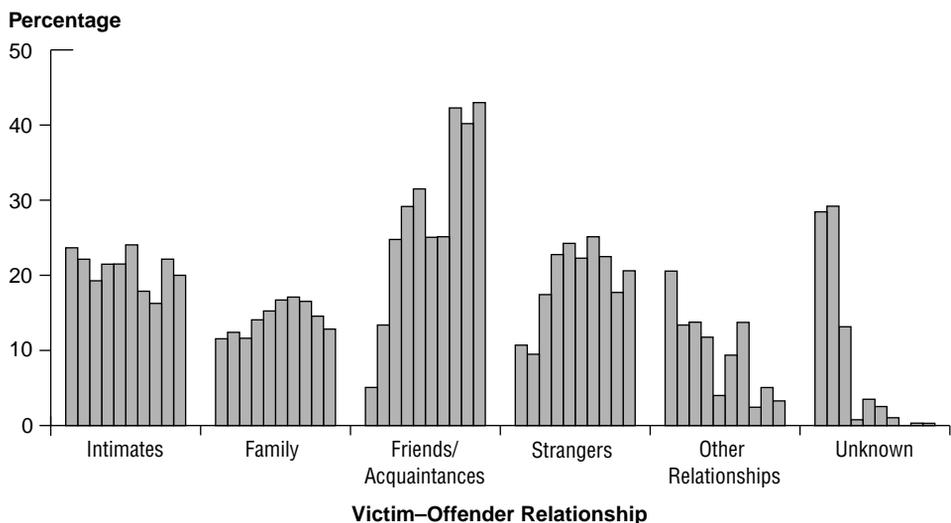
Figure 50: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Relationship between the Victim and the Offender (n = 3,681)*



* Excludes 4 cases where the gender of the victim was unknown.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 51: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Trends in Victim-Offender Relationships



Source: NHMP, AIC.

indicates that most people are killed by someone they know, either by an intimate partner or by a friend or acquaintance.

Of the homicide incidents that took place within the family, a majority occurred between custodial parent/child relationships (4.4%), a further 4.1 per cent occurred between non-custodial parent/child or step-parent/child relationships. Approximately 2 per cent of homicide incidents occurred between siblings or step-siblings, and a further 3 per cent took place within other family relationships.

Trends in Victim–Offender Relationships

An examination of the distribution of victim–offender relationships across a 10-year period reveals some interesting trends (Figure 51). The proportion of homicide incidents that involved intimate partners and other family members appears to have remained relatively stable over the years. In comparison, it seems that the proportion of homicide incidents involving friends and acquaintances has increased in the last three years.

Concomitantly, homicides occurring in the context of other relationships and unknown relationships have declined.

One possibility for the increase in homicides occurring in the context of friends and the subsequent decline in other relationships and unknown relationships is that NHMP has undertaken a number of steps³⁰ to improve data collection procedures, including the recording of victim–offender relationships.

Jurisdictional Comparisons

A review of the proportion of victim–offender relationships in each Australian state and territory reveals a number of jurisdictional differences (Table 5). For example, in all states except Tasmania and Western Australia, when a homicide occurs it is most likely to occur between friends and acquaintances. This is followed by intimate partner relationships, with the exception of New South Wales. In New South Wales, homicides that occurred between strangers was the second most common type of victim–offender interaction.

When a homicide occurs in Tasmania, it is most likely to occur between strangers. This, however, is most likely the result of the Port Arthur incident

³⁰ See the introductory chapter for an outline of the steps aimed at improving the integrity of data collection

where the relationship between the offender and 33 of the 35 victims was one of strangers. If the Port Arthur incident was excluded from analysis, then homicides in Tasmania are most likely to occur between family or friends/acquaintances (25.7%). Only 18.9 per cent of homicides in Tasmania would occur between strangers.

On the other hand, when a homicide occurs in Western Australia, it is most likely to occur between intimate partners. This finding further supports research conducted within the Western Australian Police Service. Heathcote and Bell (1998, p. 4) reported that the number of murders that were a result of a domestic situation had increased substantially in 1998 (up to 62.1% of all Western Australia homicides).

In the Northern Territory, it appears that significantly fewer homicide incidents occur between strangers in comparison to the rest of Australia. The greater proportion of homicides in the Northern Territory occurred between intimate partners, family members, friends, and acquaintances.

There is a noticeable difference in the proportion of homicide incidents in Queensland occurring in other relationships. "Other relationships" includes business relationships, fellow inmates in correctional facilities/mental health care facilities, sex rivals, and where the victim and the offender are known to each other but the nature of the relationship was not stated.³¹

Table 5: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Percentage of Victim–Offender Relationship Types by Jurisdiction (n = 3,685)

	NSW %	VIC %	QLD %	WA %	SA %	TAS %	ACT* %	NT %	Aust. %
Intimates	18.0	21.4	19.8	29.2	22.4	12.1	26.1	27.6	20.9
Family	14.6	13.0	15.2	14.8	9.2	17.8	8.7	18.7	14.3
Friends/ Acquaintances	26.9	29.3	26.9	28.7	29.8	17.8	26.1	29.4	27.6
Strangers	21.2	18.4	17.2	16.7	19.0	43.9	21.7	11.2	19.3
Other Relationships	7.6	9.1	15.5	8.2	12.9	4.7	17.4	4.2	9.8
Unknown	11.7	8.7	5.4	2.5	6.8	3.7	0.0	8.9	8.1

* Caution should be exercised when interpreting figures for the Australian Capital Territory due to the relative small incidence of homicides in that territory.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

³¹ Dalton (1999) examined the occurrence of prison homicide in Australia during a 19-year period (1980–1998), and found that Queensland recorded the second largest number of prison homicides in recent years (both overall as well as since 1995). In total, Queensland accounted for approximately 20 per cent of all prison homicides during the years under review (Dalton 1999). It is likely that a proportion of the other relationships involves homicides between fellow inmates.

It is also highly probable that a proportion of “other relationship” homicides where the victim and the offender were known to one another but the nature of their relationship was not stated may actually fall under the category of “Friends or Acquaintances”. In the absence of further details, however, one can only speculate.

Ten-Year Summary—Victim–Offender Relationship Profile

During the period from 1 July 1989–30 June 1999:

- Eight out of 10 homicides occurred between people who were known to one another.
- Females were more likely to be killed by an intimate partner, whereas males were more likely to be killed by a friend or acquaintance.
- Just under 2 out of 10 homicides occurred between strangers.
- In all Australian states and territories, except Tasmania and Western Australia, when a homicide occurs it is most likely to occur between friends and acquaintances.
- In Western Australia, when a homicide occurs, it is most likely to occur between intimate partners.

Homicide in the Course of Other Crime

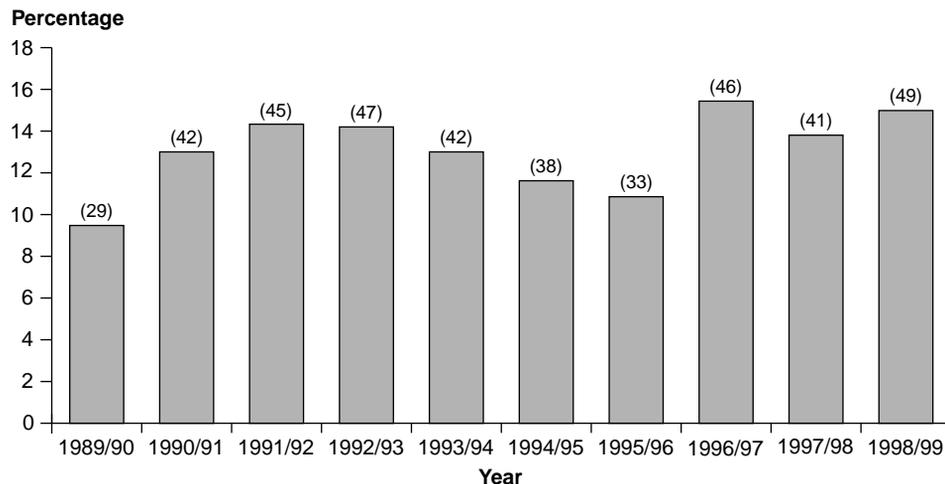
Homicide is arguably the most serious offence that could be committed against a person. However, on some rare occasions, the act of homicide is often a “side effect” or unintentional consequence of another criminal act (Maxfield 1989). Homicides that occur in the commission of other crime are commonly classified as “instrumental homicides” because the death of the victim is subsidiary to the primary goal—money, property, power, control (Miethe and Drass 1999).

This chapter will examine homicide incidents that occurred in the commission of other crime, with specific focus on robbery / theft and sexual assault. Foremost, however, it is important to examine whether there have been any upward or downward trends in the incidence of homicide occurring in the course of other crime in Australia across a 10-year period. Jurisdictional trends will also be examined.

Over a 10-year period, the number of homicide incidents occurring in the course of other crime has remained relatively stable (Figure 52). In total, approximately 13 per cent of all homicide incidents occurred in the course of other crime (Figure 53), with the average for the three most recent years at 14.8 per cent.

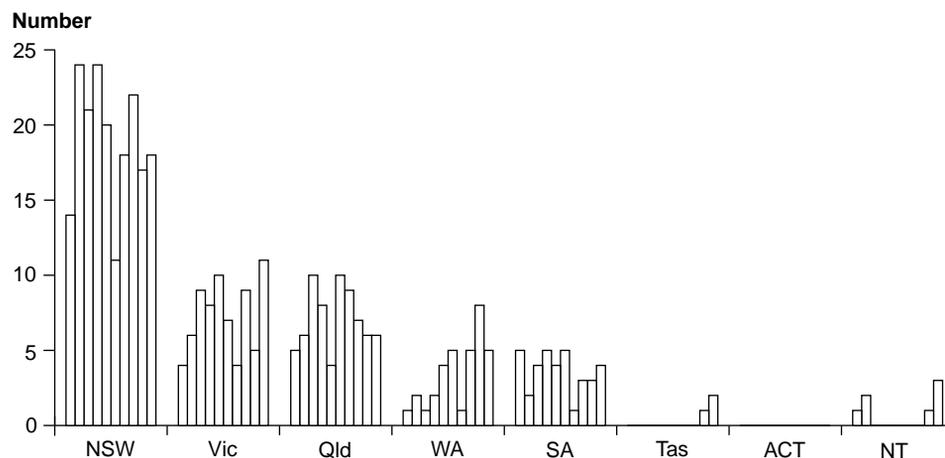
When the number of homicide incidents that occurred in the course of other crime in each Australian state and territory is examined, there appear to be significant variations across jurisdictions, with a majority (45.9%) of these incidents occurring in New South Wales (Figure 53). In Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, a homicide incident occurring in the course of another crime is a relatively infrequent event, with only 10 such events occurring in these three jurisdictions combined over a 10-year period. On the other hand, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, and South Australia all experienced marked fluctuations from year to year, mostly attributable to the small number of homicide incidents that occurred in the course of other crime in these states.

Figure 52: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Incidents Occurring in the Course of Other Crime (n = 412) as a Percentage of all Homicide Incidents (n = 3,150)



Number of incidents occurring in the course of other crime per year shown in brackets.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 53: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Homicide Incidents Occurring in the Course of Other Crime (n = 412)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Homicide in the Course of Robbery

Robbery is both a property crime and a crime of violence (Cook 1987; Indermaur 1995). The definition of robbery delineates the relationship between these two dimensions: the offence of robbery involves the unlawful taking of property under confrontational circumstances from the immediate possession of a person (or an organisation), accompanied by force, threat of force or violence and/or causing the victim to be fearful (ABS 1998). Where the robbery is followed by homicide, then the force or violence employed by the offender has been of a lethal nature. The victim of the initial crime of robbery becomes the victim in the homicide as well. This is usually referred to as “double victimisation” (Polk 1994a). Across the 10-year period under review, homicide during the course of robbery accounted for approximately 66 per cent of all homicide incidents that occurred during the course of other crime.

Previous research suggests that robbery homicides are more similar to other robberies than to other homicides. The evidence strongly supports that robbery/murder is an intrinsic by-product of robbery, with the variations in the robbery rate being closely linked to variations in the robbery-homicide rate (Cook 1987). In order to examine this phenomenon, and the factors associated with the initial crime of robbery and the subsequent act of homicide, it is useful to initially view the offence of robbery in Australia in a broader perspective.

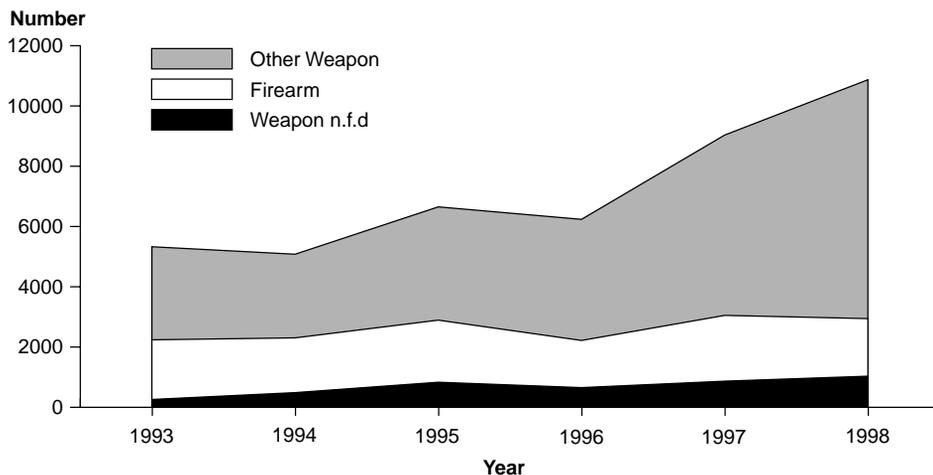
Nationally, there were 17,990 victims³² of robbery recorded by police in Australia during 1998 (ABS 1998). Armed robberies accounted for 46 per cent of all robberies, with a total of 10,850 victims of armed robberies in 1998. Individual persons represented 57 per cent of victims of armed robberies and 91 per cent of unarmed robberies. Figures indicate that the number of armed robberies³³ have increased gradually over the years (Figure 54). From 1997 to 1998, armed robbery victimisation increased by 20 per cent.

Cook (1987) argues that the incidence of robbery and the incidence of robbery/homicide follow similar patterns. However, the following analysis does not offer support to this contention, it appears that although the incidence of robbery in Australia is increasing, the proportion of homicide

³² Excludes organisations.

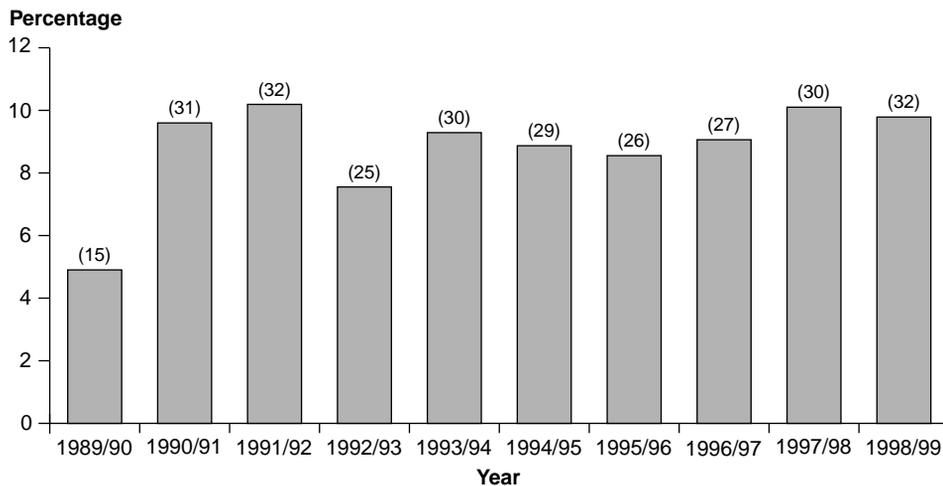
³³ Armed robbery is considered instead of robbery as most homicides that occur in the course of robbery involve a weapon (this includes hands and feet).

Figure 54: Australia, 1993–1998: Number of Armed Robberies by Type of Weapon Used



Source: Recorded Crime 1993–1998, ABS.

Figure 55: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Incidents that Occurred in the Commission of Robbery (n = 277) as a Percentage of All Homicide Incidents (n = 3,150)



Number of incidents that occurred in the commission of robbery per year shown in brackets.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

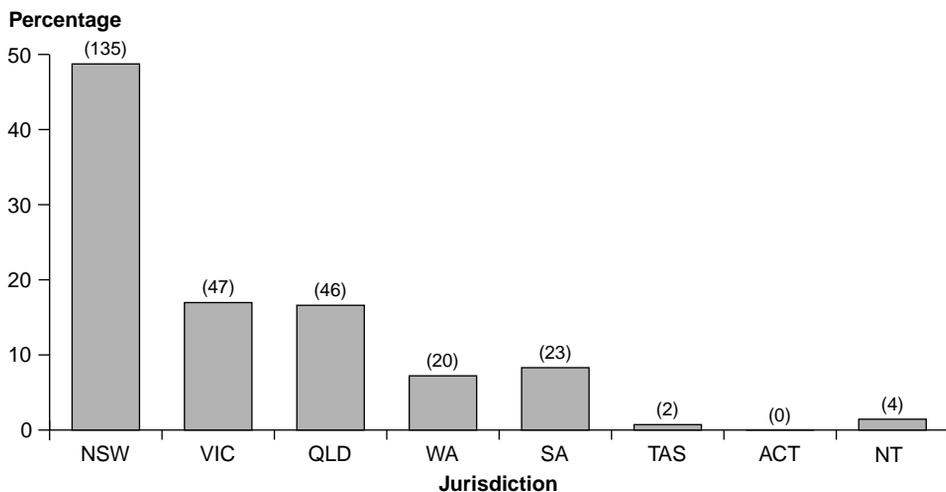
incidents that have occurred in the commission of robbery have remained relatively stable over the years (Figure 55).

Based on available international data, the incidence of homicide occurring in the course of robbery/theft ranges from as low as 4.0 per cent in New Zealand (Central Intelligence Bureau (CIB) Support Group 1998), 4.6 per cent in Canada (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 1998), 7.7 per cent in England and Wales (Home Office 1998), 9.5 per cent in the United States (United States Department of Justice 1999), and as high as 10.8 per cent in Fiji³⁴ (Adinkrah 1996). During 1998/99, approximately 10 per cent of all homicide incidents occurred in the course of robbery/theft in Australia.

A jurisdictional comparison reveals that during the 10-year period under review, approximately 50 per cent of homicide incidents that occurred in the course of robbery occurred in the state of New South Wales (Figure 56).

In addition, a comparison between homicides that occurred between 1968 and 1981 (Wallace 1986) and 1989/90 and 1998/99 (NHMP data) indicates that the percentage of homicide incidents occurring in the course of robbery in New South Wales has exhibited remarkable stability over time. Between

Figure 56: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Incidents that Occurred in the Commission of Robbery (n = 277)



Number of homicide incidents that occurred in the course of robbery per jurisdiction shown in brackets.
Source: NHMP, AIC.

³⁴ Between the years 1982 and 1992.

1968 and 1981, 11.7 per cent of all homicides occurred in the course of theft/robbery (Wallace 1986). During the 10-year period under review, 12.6 per cent of all homicide incidents in New South Wales occurred in the course of robbery.

Robberies may result in the victim's death for a number of reasons. The death may be a mistake, an escalation of violence induced by the victim's resistance, or some other factor inherent in the robbery process. In some robbery murders, the death is a distinct event that occurs in conjunction with a robbery, or as a result of a momentary vicious impulse. In such cases, it is reasonable to view the killing as a by-product of the robbery (Cook 1987).

Nature of Robbery-Homicide

In order to gain a better understanding of the situations that lead to a robbery-homicide, some illustrative case studies follow. As will be shown in the case studies, in some homicide incidents the offender(s) attends the scene with the intention only to commit robbery. In some incidents, the armed offender(s) will attend the scene with the intention to commit robbery and use violence.

Case Study One

An elderly woman was walking home through an isolated laneway after visiting the local shopping centre. The victim was approached by the young offender who knocked the victim to the ground. Whilst the victim was on the ground, the offender took the victim's handbag. The victim sustained a broken wrist and hip, and abrasions. The victim was admitted to hospital, but subsequently died as a result of the injuries sustained.

Case Study Two

Three offenders observed a residence for some time. They each armed themselves with blunt instruments and went up to the front door of the residence. One of the offenders smashed the glass pane in the door and manipulated the lock. All 3 offenders gained entry to the premises. The offenders located the victim and instructed the victim to remain in the bedroom whilst they checked the residence for money. The victim entered the kitchen and was confronted by the offender who picked up a knife from the kitchen bench and fatally stabbed the victim. The offenders then decamped and attended the local shop to spend the proceeds of the robbery.

Case Study Three

The offender entered the victim's residence by removing the flyscreen from the kitchen window and sliding the window open. The offender then ransacked the premises. The offender then confronted the victim and physically assaulted the victim with his hands and feet. The victim was taken to hospital, but died shortly after arrival.

Case Study Four

The victim was walking to the local bank to deposit the daily takings from a small business. The offender approached the victim and produced a handgun. The offender then demanded the money from the victim. The offender grabbed the money from the victim and fired one shot, fatally wounding the victim.

Homicide in the Course of Sexual Assault

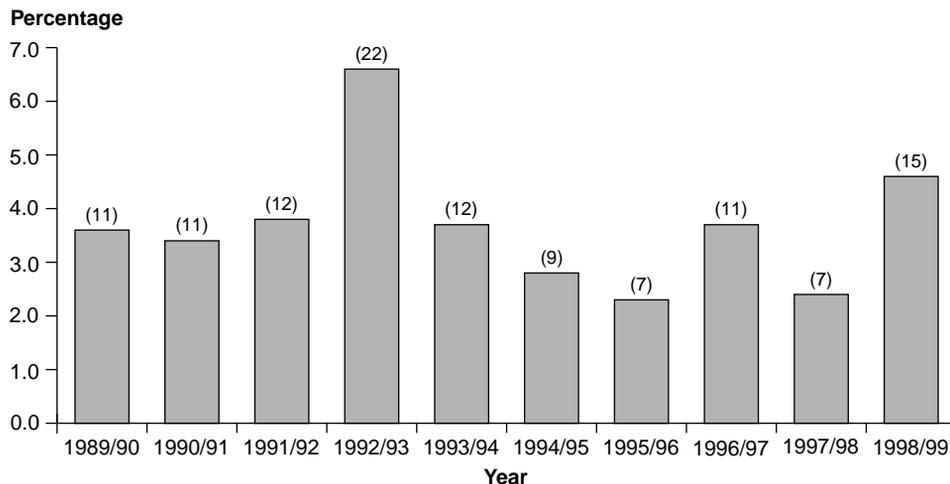
Sexual homicide has been defined as “the killing of a person in the context of power, sexuality, and brutality” (Ressler et al. 1988, p. 1). Previous research suggests that homicide incidents that occur in the course of sexual assault are characterised as being amongst the most violent of all killings in Australia (Wallace 1986). Typically, there is no pre-existing relationship between the victim and the offender (Wallace 1986), and such crimes are also more likely to receive widespread publicity. Similarly, it is this type of homicide incident that would create the greatest fear because of its apparent random nature (Ressler et al. 1988).

The sudden and unprovoked nature of these attacks, the brutality of the offences, and the powerlessness and defencelessness of most of the victims combine to make these incidents amongst the most disturbing of all homicides (Wallace 1986, p. 161).

In some instances, however, the homicide may be committed for the main purpose of removing the sole witness. In other cases, the victim may resist which subsequently results in both the offender panicking and the victim's death (Silverman and Kennedy 1993). Alternatively, there are some homicide incidents where the homicide is not a “side effect” of the sexual assault. These would include for example, serial rape where both the sexual assault and the homicide are the main intentions behind the act (Ressler et al. 1988).

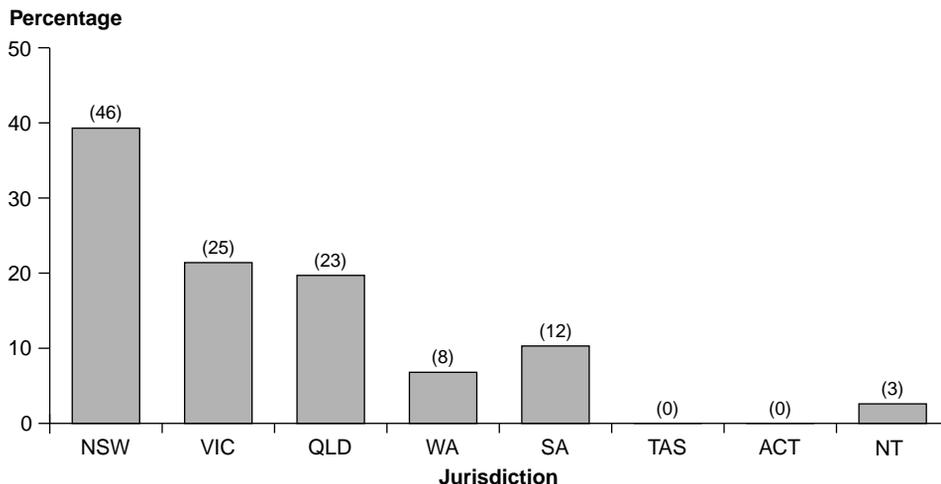
It has also been suggested that the number of sexual homicides occurring in a given year is difficult to definitively determine, partially because of the manner in which the crimes are investigated (Ressler et al. 1988). In some homicide cases, where it is obvious that a sexual assault and a homicide has

Figure 57: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Homicide Incidents that Occurred in the Commission of Sexual Assault (n =117) as a Percentage of All Homicide Incidents (n = 3,150)



Number of homicide incidents that occurred in the course of sexual assault per year shown in brackets.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 58: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Homicide Incidents that Occurred in the Commission of Sexual Assault (n = 117)



Number of homicide incidents that occurred in the course of sexual assault per jurisdiction shown in brackets.
 Source: NHMP, AIC.

taken place, the crime is most often reported as a homicide, not as a sexual assault (Brownmiller 1975; MacDonald 1971). In other instances, conclusive evidence of sexual assault may be inadequate or lacking (Groth and Burgess 1977).

These difficulties aside, the following discussion will examine the incidence and relevant characteristics of sexual assault followed by homicide in Australia based on NHMP data.

Silverman and Kennedy (1993) noted that of the 525 sex-related murder incidents (about 4% of all murders) that occurred in Canada between 1961 and 1990, approximately 94 per cent of the sex/murders (where the type of relationship was documented) were attributable to strangers.

Based on NHMP data, approximately 3.7 per cent of all homicide incidents (n = 117) between 1989 and 1999 occurred in the course of sexual assault. Despite yearly fluctuations due to the low number of incidents, homicide incidents occurring in the course of sexual assault have remained relatively stable over the years (Figure 57). As may be the case in some robbery-homicides, lack of cooperation or resistance of the victim may instigate the homicide in some sex-homicides.

Jurisdictional comparisons reveal that the state of New South Wales has the highest incidence of homicide occurring the course of sexual assault. Approximately 41 per cent of all Australian homicide incidents which also involved sexual assault were recorded in New South Wales, a further 19 per cent of these sex-homicides occurred in Victoria and in Queensland. Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory recorded no such homicide incidents during the 10-year period under review (Figure 58).

The Nature of Sexual Assault followed by Homicide

There are various reasons why a sexual assault may result in the death of the victim. The following case studies provide an illustrative example of the circumstances of some of the incidents of sexual assault that were accompanied by lethal violence.

Case Study Five

The victim attended the area of the incident in order to participate in a sporting competition. After the competition, most players attended the local hotel for a drink. The victim was approached by the offender who offered to walk the victim back to where the victim was staying. On the way to the victim's temporary residence, the offender struck the victim to the head and dragged the victim to the local stormwater

drains. The victim was sexually assaulted and then fatally assaulted. The victim was found in the stormwater drains naked and had sustained numerous injuries to head and torso.

Case Study Six

The victim had attended a nightclub and had pre-arranged to meet some friends at a local sporting facility. During the early hours of the morning, the victim walked to the sporting facility. The victim was approached by the offender and rendered unconscious. The victim was then loaded into a harness racing buggy and wheeled into the grounds of the sporting facility. The victim was then sexually assaulted and beaten to death. The victim's body was found buried naked in a sandpit at the location of the incident.

Case Study Seven

The offender was waiting for the victim in the backyard of the victim's residence. During the night, the victim went outside to use the toilet. The victim was assaulted and then dragged inside where the offender sexually assaulted the victim. The victim was fatally beaten with a blunt instrument and the victim's premises were set alight in a bid to allegedly cover up any evidence of the murder.

Case Study Eight

Two young victims and the offender's biological children were left in the care of the offender. The offender's 2 biological children were put to bed in another room. In another room, the 2 victims were then sexually assaulted and killed. The offender then committed suicide. A suicide note revealed that the main reason the offender killed the 2 victims (and himself) after sexually abusing them was because he felt guilty for what he had done.

Summary—Homicide in the Course of Other Crime

In summary, the main findings of this section “Homicide in the Course of Other Crime” are that:

- Approximately 13 per cent of all homicide incidents occurred in the course of other crime, such as robbery and sexual assault.
- The number of homicide incidents that occurred in the course of other crime has remained relatively stable over the 10-year period.
- Robbery accounts for 67 per cent of all homicide incidents that occurred in the course of other crime.
- During the 10-year period, 1 in 10 homicide incidents occurred in the course of robbery.
- Variations in the incidence of robbery-homicide in Australia are not closely linked to variations in the incidence of robbery—figures indicate that armed robbery has increased gradually over the years, whereas the proportion of homicide incidents that occurred in the course of robbery have remained relatively stable over the years.
- Very few incidents of sexual assault result in the death of the victim, with only 3.7 per cent of all homicide incidents occurring in the course of sexual assault.

Mass and Serial Murders in Australia

This chapter will examine the statistically rare events of mass and serial murder in Australia. This chapter will also include a discussion of the specific characteristics (typologies) of mass and serial murders that are recorded in the NHMP as having occurred between 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999.

Mass Murders

The vast majority of homicide incidents in Australia involve only 1 fatality. Approximately 5 per cent involve more than 1 victim. Depending upon the magnitude and context, some homicide incidents become enshrined as landmark historical events and others give rise to substantial changes in public policy.³⁵ The following discussion will focus specifically on homicide incidents documented in the NHMP as involving 4 or more victims.³⁶

Although, there is a great deal of inconsistency in the literature concerning the conceptualisation and definition of multiple homicide, according to Fox and Levin (1998) an incident claiming 4 or more victims at once is referred to as a mass murder. As will be discussed later on in this chapter, including an element of time in the definition of mass murder creates some difficulties when one is presented with a multiple homicide that does not fit neatly into the definition. Other researchers have also encountered the same problem (Fox and Levin 1998). Therefore, in this chapter we will attempt to minimise the distinctions between mass murder and serial murder based on time differences, but to focus more specifically on the differing characteristics of each.

Research conducted on mass murder is still in its infancy. However, a number of researchers have put forth various typologies in order to

³⁵ As a result of the Port Arthur incident in which 35 people lost their lives on 28 April 1996, the Federal Government introduced the uniform national firearms licensing and registration framework (Nationwide Agreement on Firearms), and the compulsory surrender (with compensation) of semi-automatic firearms.

³⁶ It is acknowledged that by setting a limit of four or more victims, this inherently excludes family-related incidents where two or three family members are killed in one incident.

categorise those who commit mass murder to gain an insight into the behavioural “make-up” of the offender. These social constructs are most commonly based on behavioural dynamics, motivation, victim characteristics and selection methodologies, loci of motivations, and anticipated rewards (Holmes and Holmes 1992).

However, by examining the background of a multiple murderer, it is often not possible to discriminate those life history variables that exerted a causal influence on committing mass murder from those that did not exert such influence (Busch and Cavanaugh 1986). In other words, it may be difficult to isolate factors that may have contributed to the occurrence of mass murder. We can ask questions, but beyond these general questions lies the enigma of “why”.

A number of researchers have attempted to organise mass murderers into meaningful categories. Dietz (1986), for example, classified offenders of multiple homicide according to three categories: family annihilators, pseudo-commandoes, and set-and-run killers. These categories were further expanded by Holmes and Holmes (1994) who included disciples and disgruntled employees. A brief description of these five typologies follows:

1. The *family annihilator* characterises the offender as one who murders the entire family at one time, often including the family pet. They are usually the senior male member of the family, depressed, and have often with a history of alcoholism. Similarly, these incidents almost exclusively occur in a residential setting.
2. The *pseudo-commando* is usually preoccupied with weaponry, and may have an extensive supply of firearms.
3. The *set-and-run* killer will employ techniques such as bombing or poisoning, to allow his own escape before the act itself occurs.
4. The offender of multiple homicide who is classified as a *disciple* has committed the act out of a need for acceptance by the leader who they have come under their influence. A classic example is Charles Manson’s associates, and Tate/La Bianca Murders.
5. The *disgruntled employee* will commit multiple homicide, retaliating after having been discharged from their current place of employment or for perceived ill treatment by their employers.

Fox and Levin (1998) incorporated some of the underlying characteristics of the above five categories and suggested five other types of mass murder based on the motivation of the offender. Although there is a degree of overlap, motivations for mass murder fall into the following categories: power (psuedo-commando), revenge (family annihilator, disgruntled employee), loyalty (family annihilator), profit, and terror (psuedo-commando, set-and-run killer).

When mass murderers are motivated by revenge, as is the case in some family annihilators and those characterised as disgruntled employees, the murderer seeks to get even with people he knows—with his estranged wife and all her children, or the boss and all his employees. The concept “murder by proxy” refers to how some victims are chosen because they are identified with the primary target against whom revenge is sought (Franzier 1975). For example, the family annihilator may kill all his children because he sees them as an extension of his wife, killing them to avenge her.

Similarly, the disgruntled employee after being reprimanded and/or dismissed, may kill some of his fellow employees and then his boss. Sometimes, the primary target of revenge is not a specific individual, it may be directed at society at large. The paranoid mass murderer believes that there is a conspiracy against him in which large number of people, including family, friends, and strangers are all against him and are conspiring to do him harm (Fox and Levin 1998).

Although the development of most of these typologies were based primarily on American homicide cases, mostly derived from using the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)’s Supplementary Homicide Reports, it will be interesting to examine whether these typologies could also be applied to Australian homicide cases where 4 or more victims were killed. In other words, can Australian mass murders be categorised according to the five categories discussed above?

As previously stated, approximately 5 per cent of all homicide incidents involve multiple victims in Australia. Even less frequent are homicide incidents involving 4 or more victims. From 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999, the NHMP recorded 13 mass-murder incidents committed by 13 individual male offenders.³⁷ In total, these 13 mass murders resulted in the death of

³⁷ In Canada, female offenders were responsible for 10 per cent of mass-murder incidents (Silverman and Kennedy 1993), and in the United States they were responsible for 5.6 per cent of mass-murder incidents (Fox 1997, cited in Fox and Levin 1998).

94 victims (Table 6). In 1995/96, there were 3 mass murders and a total of 45 victims. This, of course, includes the Port Arthur incident where on Sunday 28 April 1996, 35 victims were killed by a single offender. In the two most recent years—1997/98 and 1998/99, Australia recorded **no** mass-murder incidents.

On average, Australia records approximately 1 mass-murder incident per year. In comparison, Canada records approximately 2.4 per year (Silverman and Kennedy 1993), and the United States records approximately 26 per year (Fox 1997, cited in Fox and Levin 1998).

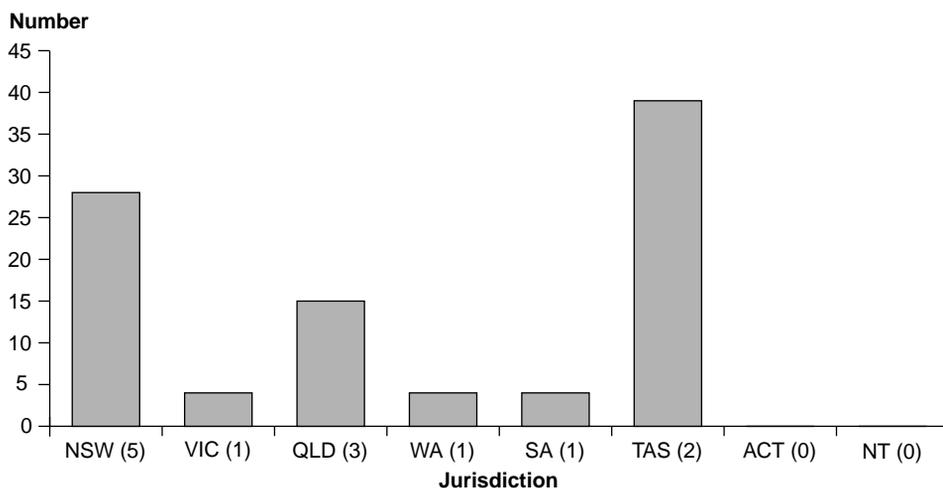
A jurisdictional comparison indicates that over the 10-year period, New South Wales recorded the highest number of mass-murder incidents (n = 5). However, as a result of the Port Arthur incident, Tasmania recorded the

Table 6: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Mass-Murder Incidents with Four or More Victims per Year

Year	1989/ 90	1990/ 91	1991/ 92	1992/ 93	1993/ 94	1994/ 95	1995/ 96	1996/ 97	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	Total
Incidents	1	2	1	3	1	1	3	1	0	0	13
Victims	6	9	7	15	4	4	45	4	0	0	94

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 59: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Mass-Murder Victims by Jurisdiction (n = 94)



Number of incidents are indicated in brackets.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

highest number of mass-murder victims ($n = 45$) (Figure 59). Queensland recorded 3 mass-murder incidents which resulted in the deaths of 15 victims. Neither the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory recorded any mass-murder incidents during the period under review.

A Typology of Mass Murder in Australia

An examination of each of the 13 mass murders recorded in the NHMP database reveals that Australian mass murders are best grouped according to typologies based on the motivation of the offender. Often, typologies that revolve around the motive for the murder are probably the most fruitful way of classifying the murders (Silverman and Kennedy 1993). However, it should be noted that the motive behind mass murders, as in other homicides, is very complex in nature and may involve a number of different factors. There may be some degree of overlap between two typologies that could adequately describe the motive behind the mass murder, making it difficult to place the incident into one single category. In such cases, the mass murder needs to be classified according to what the main motive was perceived to be.

Table 7 lists the type of mass murders that occurred in Australia over a 10-year period. A majority of mass murders in Australia occurred primarily as a result of the offender's need for revenge (85%). In 7 mass-murder incidents, the revenge was primarily directed at an intimate partner or former intimate partner. In such cases, the offender killed all his children because he saw them as an extension of his (former) partner; he sought to get even with her.³⁸ Three other revenge-motivated mass murders stemmed from the offender's paranoid view of society at large. Two prominent examples are the Strathfield massacre and the Port Arthur massacre.

The Strathfield massacre took place on Saturday 17 August 1991, when 33-year-old Wade Frankum made his way to the Strathfield Plaza shopping Centre in New South Wales and murdered 7 people before turning the gun on himself. Apparently after he purchased his rifle, he was quoted as saying that he was going to use the firearm to "wipe people out" and to "protect myself" (Sharpe 1997, p. 380).

³⁸ Also referred to as familicide.

Psychiatrist Dr Rod Milton postulated that the motivating forces behind Frankum committing mass murder were:

ANGER, because he was a failure, chronically unassertive and could not tolerate intimacy; *GUILT*, over his mother's suicide; *CONFLICT*, over his grandmother's estate and certain trivial disputes with the neighbours, and finally; *IMPECUNIOSITY*, his money had run out, depriving him of the outlet for his loneliness and sexual needs with prostitutes (Waller 1994, p. 118).

Dr Milton further noted that Frankum's family background, his life history, and his personality were insufficient in themselves to explain the murders. He suggests that societal factors promoting violence exist now which did not exist previously, and that it was these which may have tipped the balance (Milton 1994).

Another revenge-motivated mass murder was the Port Arthur massacre that occurred on Sunday 28 April 1996, where Martin Bryant went on a "shooting spree" and murdered 35 men, women and children at Port Arthur Tasmania.³⁹ The youngest victim was 3, and the oldest 72. A great deal has been written about Bryant's various motives. Some writers postulate that similarly to Frankum, Bryant was motivated by "anger" but he is also said to have harboured grudges (Scott 1997).

For years he had desperately sought contact with people, yet he either frightened or annoyed them with his ability to say and do the most inappropriate things. "I was knocked around all the time", he would recall. "No one wanted to be my friend" (Linnell 1999, p. 49 and Bryant quoted in Linnell 1999, p. 49).

Both of these mass murders occurred because the offenders wanted to be noticed, they wanted to seek revenge from a society which had apparently mistreated them in some way and was responsible for their difficulties in life (Fox and Levin 1998).

Another perpetrator of mass murder was classified as being motivated by "loyalty". In this mass-murder incident, the offender killed his 4 daughters prior to committing suicide. A few mass murderers are inspired to kill by a "warped sense of love and loyalty—a desire to save their loved ones from

³⁹ This can also be referred to as a spree-murder—defined as the killing of three or more victims in different locations but within the context of the one event (Douglas and Munn 1992).

misery and hardship” (Fox and Levin 1998, p. 446). This type of mass murder is also referred to as “suicide by proxy” (Frazier 1975).

As in the example described herein, suicide by proxy typically involves a father who is despondent over the fate of the family unit and takes his own life and the life of those of his children and sometimes his wife, in order to protect them from the pain and suffering in their lives (Fox and Levin 1998). Although, in some cases this may be seen as a “convenient excuse” for their actions.

Finally, in another mass-murder incident the motive was not entirely clear. After careful examination of the material at hand, the motive appeared to involve at least some degree of ambivalence between power and terror. This mass murder resulted in the death of 6 people who were living at a backpackers’ hostel in Kings Cross, New South Wales. The offender had allegedly gone on an arson spree over a 2-year period, resulting in 146 charges of arson. These arson attacks appeared to be entirely indiscriminate or random with no specific target.

The offender was not exacting revenge upon society, nor was he burning down these buildings in the hope of collecting insurance money. He may have been trying to instill fear in the general public or “send a message” through his actions. Alternatively, he may have been motivated by a need for power and control, also known as a “thrill kill”. However, given the ambiguity of the motivation of the offence, this mass-murder incident could not be adequately classified according to one of the five typologies.

Given that there are different motivations of offenders of mass murder, we would expect that their relationship to the victims would also differ.

Contrary to popular belief, mass murderers infrequently attack strangers.

Table 7: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Mass Murders According to Motivation of Offender (n = 13)

Motivations for Mass Murder	Australian Mass Murders	
	Number	Percentage
Power	0	0
Revenge	11	84.6
Loyalty	1	7.7
Profit	0	0
Terror	0	0
Unclassifiable	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

Source: NHMP, AIC.

In the present study, just over half of the mass-murder victims were not known to the offender⁴⁰ (Table 8). Where the offender knew his victims, they were most likely to be his children, some other family members, a friend, or an acquaintance. Just under half of the mass murderers killed their intimate partners.

This is consistent with the findings of both Fox (1997 cited in Fox and Levin 1998) and Silverman and Kennedy (1993) who found that mass murderers were more likely to kill family members than strangers.

When one examines the instruments of mass murders, we would automatically assume that given the relative lethality of firearms, a firearm would be the most common weapon used to commit mass murder. Indeed, in the present study a firearm was the most common single weapon used to commit mass murder, accounting for less than half of the mass-murder incidents (Figure 60). A firearm was also used to claim the highest number of victims in a single mass-murder incident in Australia—the Port Arthur incident where 35 victims were killed.

However, there are other instruments of homicide that may be considered more lethal in terms of inherent capacity (Grabosky and Mouzos 1999). For example, explosive devices—the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing in the United States, and more recently, the use of airplanes—such as the apparent intentional crashing of an *Egypt Air* aircraft where over 200 persons were killed. Therefore, if relative lethality is measured by the number of victims killed, a firearm is not the most lethal instrument of homicide.

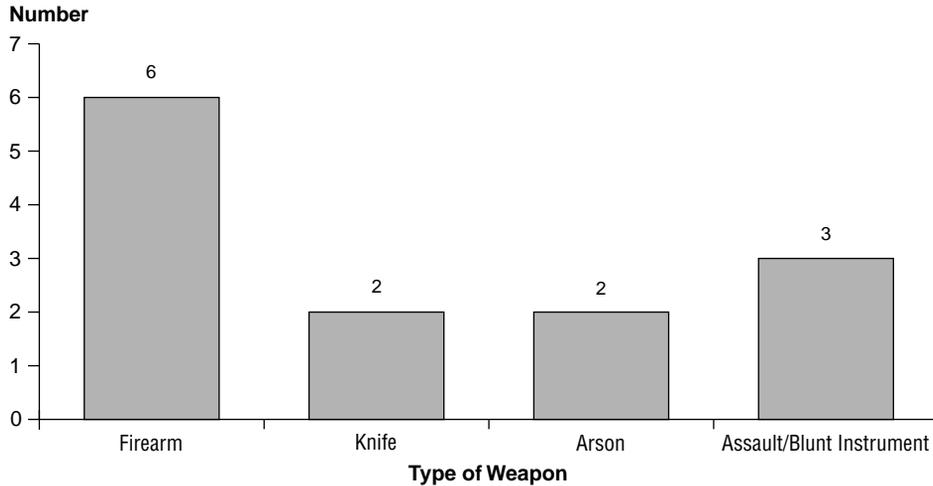
Table 8: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Mass-Murder Victims by Victim–Offender Relationship

Victim–Offender Relationship	Number	Percentage
Partner/Former Partner	6	6.4
Other Family	25	26.6
Friend/Acquaintance	15	16.0
Stranger	48	51.1
Other	0	0
Total	94	100.0

Source: NHMP, AIC.

⁴⁰ Thirty-three of these victims were killed in the Port Arthur incident and were not known to the offender.

Figure 60: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Type of Weapon Used by Mass Murderers (n = 13)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Serial Murders

Serial murder is very different from mass murder. It is not necessarily a new form of homicide,⁴¹ but it is impersonal and stranger perpetrated and is growing in frequency and notoriety, at least in the United States (Holmes and DeBurger 1985, Rule 1986 cited in Holmes et al. 1998). It has been estimated that approximately 5,000 people each year in the United States are victims of serial killers (Holmes and DeBurger 1985). The FBI estimates that there are 30 serial killers roaming throughout the United States. One commentator based on a personal interview with Ted Bundy who was on death row in Florida, suggested that the number is much higher (Rule 1984, Bundy 1985 cited in Holmes et al. 1998).

Since 1960, Australia has recorded 9 known serial killers (Kidd 1999). There may be other serial killers operating throughout Australia who have yet to be apprehended by police. For example, Western Australia Police suspect a serial killer is responsible for the abduction and murder of 3 women in Claremont, Western Australia. Moreover, it is also important to consider that there may have been some murderers who, were not for their having been apprehended early in their killing career, may have gone on to claim more victims. For example, Barrie Watts and Valmae Beck only committed

⁴¹ Although the term “serial murder” was coined by Robert Ressler of the FBI Behavioural Sciences Unit in Quantico, United States, in the early 1980s, the act of serial murder in modern times can be traced back to as early as 1888 with the murders committed by “Jack the Ripper”.

1 murder before being apprehended.⁴² However, their “Modus Operandi” (MO)⁴³ can be considered characteristic of the sexual serial murderer, with Watts openly admitting that he had intentions to commit further murders (Kocsis and Irwin 1998).

Similar to mass murder, there is some disagreement regarding the definition of serial murder. Disagreement is generally centred around the number of victims that a multiple murderer needs to have killed before being classified as a serial killer. Hickey (1991), Holmes and Holmes (1998) and Egger (1998) all define serial murder as the killing of 3 or more people over a period of time. In their definition of serial murder, Fox and Levin (1998) indicate that there needs to be a string of 4 or more homicides committed by one or a few perpetrators. Egger (1998) and Rappaport (1988) both propose a broader definition without any constraints as to the number of victims killed. Specifically, Egger (1998, p. 5) identified the following characteristics which may typify serial murderers and which may be used as flags to alert authorities to the possibility that a serial murder is operating:

- (1) 1 or more individuals (in many cases, males) commit(s) a second murder and/or subsequent murder.
- (2) There is generally no prior relationship between victim and attacker (if there is a relationship, such a relationship will place the victim in a subjugated role to the killer).
- (3) Subsequent murders are at different times and have no apparent connection to the initial murder.
- (4) Are usually committed in a different geographical location.
- (5) The motive is not for material gain and is for the murderer’s desire to have power or dominance over his victims.
- (6) Victims may have symbolic value for the murderer and/or perceived to be of low status and in most instances unable to defend themselves or alert others to their.

In Australia, law enforcement personnel accept the FBI definition of serial murder. This definition was developed by the Critical Incident Response

⁴² They were apparently apprehended whilst searching for their next victim (McGregor 1990).

⁴³ MO refers to the actions taken by the offender to perpetrate the offence successfully. It is a learned behaviour that evolves as the offender becomes more sophisticated and confident (Douglas et al. 1992, p. 353).

Group (CIRG) of the FBI, after in-depth, long term studies of serial murderers and their crimes. Accordingly, in the classic type of serial murder:

there are 2 or more separate homicide events which occur over a period of time (hours, days, weeks, or even years). There is a cooling-off period between episodes. These crimes are predatory. The offender frequently stalks his victims. The motive is clearly psychological. The offender's behaviour and the crime scene evidence typically indicate sexual and sadistic features, and may involve torture and mutilation of the victim (Cook and Hinman 1999, p. 364).

This definition contains a sexual element. However, research suggests that the presence of this element and its meaning to the offender may vary (Ressler et al. 1988). The motive may not be sexual in the normal sense of the word, with the role of sexual gratification being less difficult to identify in certain types of serial murder, such as a hedonistic serial killer.⁴⁴ Ressler et al. (1988) have noted that some acts committed during a serial murder were later found to have a sexual meaning to the offender. In certain cases, the motivation for serial murder is often something more complicated and intrinsic than just sexual gratification. For the serial killer "the experience is one of great pleasure in exerting power and control over the victim including the power over life and death" (Geberth 1990, p. 73).

As pointed out in the previous section on mass murders, some incidents do not contain all the elements as prescribed in a given definition. Most definitions are based on common elements present in a specific behaviour. In the case of uncommon and apparently motiveless behaviour, such as serial murder, discrepancies and differences are bound to arise.

Typology of Serial Murder

A number of researchers have examined the distinctive characteristics of serial murderers. Based on interviews with incarcerated serial killers in the United States, Holmes and DeBurger (1985) developed a typology of serial killers. They posit that there are four types of serial killers, although they do emphasise that these are ideal types and that "there is some obvious blending of perpetrators in the world of this serial violent personal offender" (p. 114).

⁴⁴ The thrill killer and lust killer are two types of hedonistic (pleasure-seeking) serial killers. The hedonistic serial killer kills for various reasons, but sexuality is the common component in the fantasy shared by the lust killer and the thrill killer. Both have made a connection between sex and personal gratification (Holmes and Holmes 1998).

The first type is the *visionary type*—this serial killer responds to voices or visions that demand him to kill a defined and identified cohort. This serial offender may be suffering from some form of psychosis (although most serial killers are neither psychotic or mentally disordered).

The second type is the *mission type*—this serial killers main aim is to eliminate a certain sub-population. For example, a serial killer trying to rid the community of a minority group, such as: homosexuals, prostitutes, African-Americans, or Catholics. This killer does not hear voices, nor does he react to a vision.

The third type is the *hedonistic type*—this serial killer kills because it is pleasurable or because it enhances the murderer’s social and personal status (money, material gain). There are three subtypes: *lust*, *thrill*, and *comfort*.

The first two subtypes are very similar in that they both have “an integral connection between personal violence and sexual gratification” (Holmes and Holmes 1998, p. 43). These serial killers murder because they derive pleasure from the act. The comfort killer kills for materialistic gains, such as money, business, or other financial considerations.

The fourth type is the *power/control type*—this serial killer kills in order to feel in complete control, the killer receives personal gratification from the total subjugation of the victim. “By dominating his victims completely, he experiences a “sexual” pleasure akin to the pleasure of the hedonistic serial killer of the lust or thrill subtype” (Holmes and Holmes 1996). Holmes et al. (1998) suggest that most serial killers can be categorised as being motivated by power and control.

Serial Murder in Australia

According to NHMP between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, there have been three clusters of serial murders that can be linked to different serial offenders—the serial murders committed by Paul Denyer (the “Frankston Serial Killer”), Ivan Milat (the “Backpacker Serial Killer”), and the “Snowtown serial murders”⁴⁵ which were committed by 4 different offenders acting in concert.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Task force code-named “Operation Chart”.

⁴⁶ It is important to note that at the time of publication, investigations into the Snowtown murders were still continuing. As a result, information concerning specific details of the murders, and which offender is responsible for killing which victim are not yet available. Based only on available information, these murders may be classified as serial murders, although this may be subject to change depending on further developments during the police investigation process.

Other sources (Kidd 1999) that have also recorded the number of serial murderers in Australia suggest that the true figure for this time period is 3⁴⁷ (Rodney Francis Cameron, the “Lonely Hearts Killer”, Paul Charles Denyer, the Frankston Serial Killer and Ivan Milat, the Backpacker Killer).⁴⁸ However, as NHMP data are collected on a financial year basis from police records, until a serial murderer is apprehended and linked to these murders, these cases will remain unsolved and recorded in the NHMP as such. It would be only after updating unsolved homicides that incidents whereby the victims were killed by the same offender can be linked and identified as the work of a serial killer.

Common Threads

Although there is no typical serial killer (Cook and Hinman 1999), accumulating evidence seems to suggest that there are common threads present in the behavioural make-up of serial killers:

- They grew up in a dysfunctional family (for instance, a rejecting parent, instability of residence, or lack of an appropriate role model).
- There was a history of abuse and neglect (for instance, physical, psychological, or sexual).
- Poverty, unemployment, societally blocked means to legitimate ends.
- A preoccupation with fantasy and murder.
- Learned associations between violence and pleasure (Sears 1991; Holmes et al. 1998).

They may also have exhibited the “classic warning signs such as the ‘homicidal triad’:

- persistent bed-wetting;
- starting fires; and
- cruelty to animals or other young children” (Douglas and Olshaker 1998, p. 463).

⁴⁷ Excludes the Snowtown serial murders.

⁴⁸ The so-called Granny Serial Killer committed his first murder in early March 1989; before the inception of the NHMP.

However, it is important to note that not all persons who exhibit these behavioural characteristics will go on to inflict violence and especially lethal violence on those around them. According to Megargee (1993), a combination of these factors lead to some persons engaging in serial murder, these persons possess higher than normal *instigation to aggression* and deficient *inhibitions against aggression*.

Instigation to aggression is referred to as “the sum of all forces that motivate an individual to commit a violent or aggressive act” (Megargee 1993, p. 620). Both psychological (intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation) and biological sources are included as the instigation. On the other hand, there is a set of factors that operate against instigation to aggression. These are the main reasons behind why a person fails to perform an aggressive act against another person. These inhibitory factors include moral prohibitions against violence—the ability to distinguish between right and wrong behaviour and the ability to realistically consider the likelihood of apprehension and punishment (Cook and Hinman 1999). In the case of serial murder, it is quite obvious that these offenders lack the sufficient “inhibitions against aggression”, lethal violence, and have been described as lacking consciences and empathy for their victims (Cook and Hinman 1999).

So far, we have focussed on defining serial murder, typologies, incidence in Australia, and the commonalities of serial murderers. The next stage is to bring all this together with the use of real case examples.

The following paragraphs describe the 3 known serial killers identified as having been active during the 10-year period under review. This provides an illustrative example of the crimes that they committed and the behavioural characteristics of each offender. As previous research suggests, there are a number of behavioural similarities between the 3 Australian serial killers and the expected profile.

Case Study Nine—The Lonely Hearts Killer

Background: Rodney Cameron Francis was adopted at an early age, but he was committed to an institution because he was continually in trouble at school. At age 10, he tried to strangle a young girl and an elderly lady. By this stage, his adoptive parents had completely rejected him. He drank heavily and openly displayed hostility and extreme aggression towards those close to him (Kidd 1999).

In early 1974, at the age of 19, he raped and murdered a nurse whom he had befriended. After the murder, Francis inserted a towel down the victim’s throat.

This specific act became Francis' signature.⁴⁹ Approximately one week later, Francis picked up his second victim who was hitchhiking. This victim was beaten to death with a blunt instrument and was also strangled using a sock. At two separate trials, Francis was found guilty of the murders of a man and a woman. After serving 16 years, Francis was released from prison. Approximately 3 months after his release, Francis had gone on a radio match-making show. The third victim had called the show expressing an interest in Francis. This victim was found in a motel which Francis and the victim had rented. The victim had died of asphyxiation and had also been repeatedly beaten with a blunt instrument. Similar to the other victims, this victim was also found with a handkerchief in her mouth. After this murder, Francis presented himself to police. During his trial, the presiding judge sentenced Francis to life imprisonment. In 1997, Francis confessed to the killing of another woman back in 1974. Similarly, he has since made other confessions. If his confessions are substantiated, then Francis would have been responsible for the murder of 8 victims (Kidd 1999).

Case Study Ten—The Frankston Serial Killer

Background: When Paul Charles Denyer was a baby, his mother recalls him rolling off a bench and knocking his head. Occasionally, his childhood misdeeds were flippantly attributed to the knock on his head. On one occasion, he had cut the family kitten's throat and left it hanging on the tree. On another occasion, which his primary school teacher recalls clearly, is the day that Denyer, in response to a derogatory remark, slapped a fellow class mate so hard that the pen the boy was chewing on became deeply lodged in this throat. He had apparently wanted to kill since he was 14 and his days of free time had allowed him to stalk women and make reconnaissance memoirs to find locations to dump their bodies. He also had begun to collect things he could use to strangle women (Petraitis 1995).

Twenty-six year old Denyer became known as the Frankston serial killer—he had killed 3 women during separate incidents in 1993. His first victim was a TAFE student who had disappeared. Her body was found mutilated with a distinctive criss-cross pattern carved into her chest. Less than a month after she was found, another victim was found. The second victim had gone out to buy some milk, but she never returned. She was found strangled and stabbed to death. The third victim, a young schoolgirl, was found on a bike track in Frankston. She had received fatal sharp instrument injuries. Denyer was apprehended shortly after killing the third victim. "Denyer's undoing was a deep cut on the thumb which he could not satisfactorily explain to detectives; the wound matched a piece of skin found in the victim's cut throat: he had injured himself while committing the murder" (Meadows 1995, p. 638).

⁴⁹ The signature of a serial murderer is the unique manner in which he or she commits murder. A signature may be the manner in which the person kills, certain words that he/she may say to or use the victim, a particular manner in which the killer leaves something at crime scenes, or some other indicator (Holmes and Holmes 1996).

Case Study Eleven—The Backpacker Serial Killer

Background: As Task force “Air” delved into Ivan Robert Marko Milat they discovered that he was brought up in what seemed to be a completely dysfunctional family. He was also fairly unsuccessful in having fulfilling, long-term relationships with women. He had an extensive criminal history, including an incident where he picked up 2 women and threatened them with knives, tied them up and raped one of them. There was also another unreported assault. Dr Rod Milton who advised the task force indicated that these attacks were not so much as a practice run “as a development of a mode of life, a mode of achieving pleasure and satisfaction” (Mercer 1997, p. 154).

Between 1989 and 1992, Milat murdered 7 young backpackers in the Belanglo State Forest south of Sydney. The total victim count could have been greater, but the last potential victim had escaped. Milat had murdered 2 British females, 2 German females and 1 German male, and 1 Australian female and 1 Australian male. The remains of all 7 victims were found in the same area. “They had been ritualistically murdered, and there were indications that they had been sexually assaulted” (Kidd 1999, p. 141). The English backpacker who escaped was flown back to New South Wales, and it was he who identified Milat from police photographs. In May 1994, Milat was charged with the 7 murders. As Milat pleaded not guilty, at trial it was revealed that the 7 victims had been “... sexually assaulted, stabbed, used as target practice, decapitated, tortured, hacked and bludgeoned to death” (Kidd 1999, p. 149). Milat was sentenced to life imprisonment on 7 counts of murder and to 6 years for the abduction of the backpacker who had escaped.

Summary—Mass and Serial Murders in Australia

In summary, the main findings of this section are that:

- In Australia, between 1 July 1989–30 June 1999, there were 13 mass murder incidents (where the number of victims was 4 or more) that resulted in the death of 94 persons.
- In the two most recent years—1997/98 and 1998/99, Australia recorded no mass-murder incidents.
- During the 10-year period under review, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory also did not record any mass murder incidents.
- Just over 8 out of 10 mass murderers were motivated by the “need for revenge”.
- Half of all victims of mass murder were not known to the offender and just under half of the mass murderers killed their partners or former partners.
- Just under 3 out of 5 mass murders were committed with a firearm.
- In Australia, since 1960 there have been 9 known serial killers, of which 3 were active between 1989/90 and 1998/99 and are recorded in the NHMP.
- Both mass killers and serial killers tend to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and dysfunctional families.
- Both mass murder and serial murder in Australia are statistically rare events.

Homicidal Encounters

In the previous chapters the four essential elements of homicide: incident, victim, offender characteristics, and the social relationship between the victim and the offender were examined. Long-term patterns and trends in both homicide victimisation and offending and the stable or changing characteristics of each were also identified, as were homicides occurring in the course of other crime, and the unique behavioural characteristics of mass and serial murderers. However, there is no single cause, characteristic of the parties involved, or situational context which would inevitably lead to the homicide.

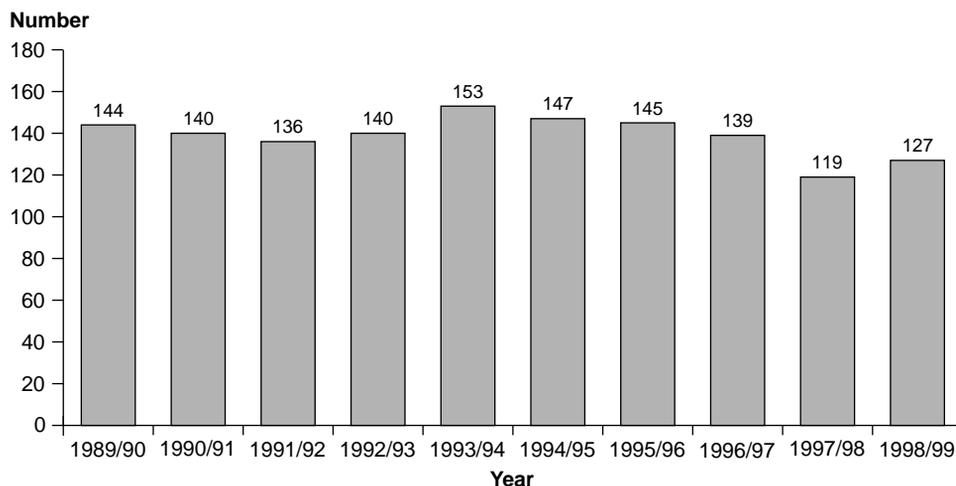
It is also important to recognise that death resulting from any violent physical act also depends on the type of weapon employed, the vulnerability of the part of the body injured, the physical health of the victim, and the availability of medical assistance (Zimring 1972, Block 1977).

Therefore, in the specific social exchange between the victim and the offender in which a homicide occurs, the probability of a lethal outcome is not determined solely, nor even predominantly, by demographic factors such as racial appearance, gender, socio-economic status, or any combination of factors that correlate with the homicide rate at the aggregate level (Cheatwood 1996). “Basic indeterminacy is always present, conditioned by factors as significant or as minor as the individual’s level of inebriation, his/her definition of self, the presence of an audience, and the choice and availability of a potential weapon” (Cheatwood 1996, p. 111).

As we have seen, there are many factors that come into play as the homicide drama unfolds. It is, therefore, difficult to predict the circumstances which will result in homicide. Moreover, there is not just one type of homicide—as we know homicide is multi-dimensional. In other words, there is not one specific set of circumstances that lead to homicide victimisation and offending.

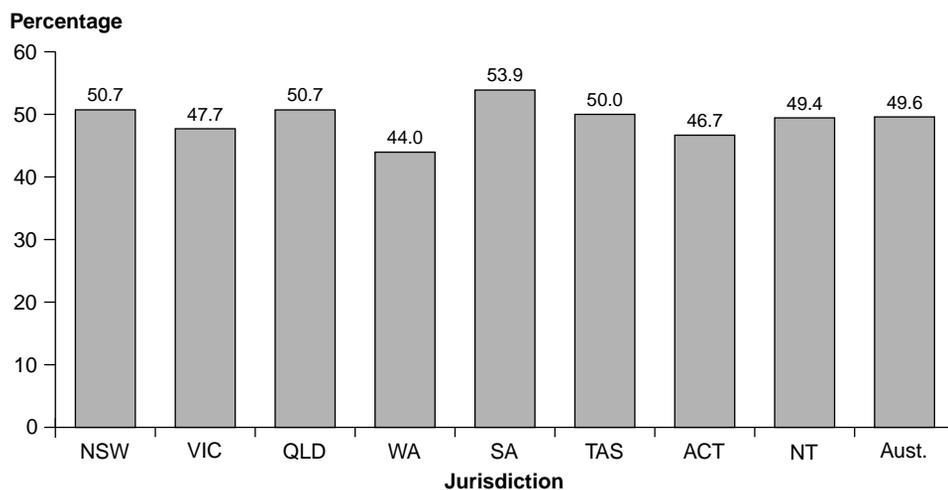
This chapter will examine the different types of homicidal encounters in Australia, focussing specifically on the differing characteristics of each

Figure 61: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents (n = 1,390)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 62: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents (n = 1,390) as a Percentage of all Homicide Incidents*



* Where an offender has been identified, n = 2,803.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

encounter and the importance of the interaction between incident, victim, and offender characteristics. Vignettes will be used throughout this chapter to illustrate the different types of homicidal encounters occurring in Australia.

Males Killing Males—Scenarios of Masculine Violence

An overwhelming majority of research has established that violence in general, and homicide in particular, are masculine phenomena. “Violence is gendered: it is a problem and consequence of masculinity” (Braithwaite and Daly 1994, p. 189). In the second chapter “Homicide in Australia: A Brief Overview”, we reported that just over 3 out of 5 victims of homicide and about 7 out of 8 homicide offenders in Australia were male. Any study examining homicidal encounters would not be complete unless it included a discussion of the circumstances and characteristics where males kill one another and the scenarios of masculine violence. The following discussion will be divided into three sections: (1) trends in male-to-male homicide, (2) circumstances and characteristics of masculine homicide, and (3) scenarios of masculine homicide, including case studies of each scenario.

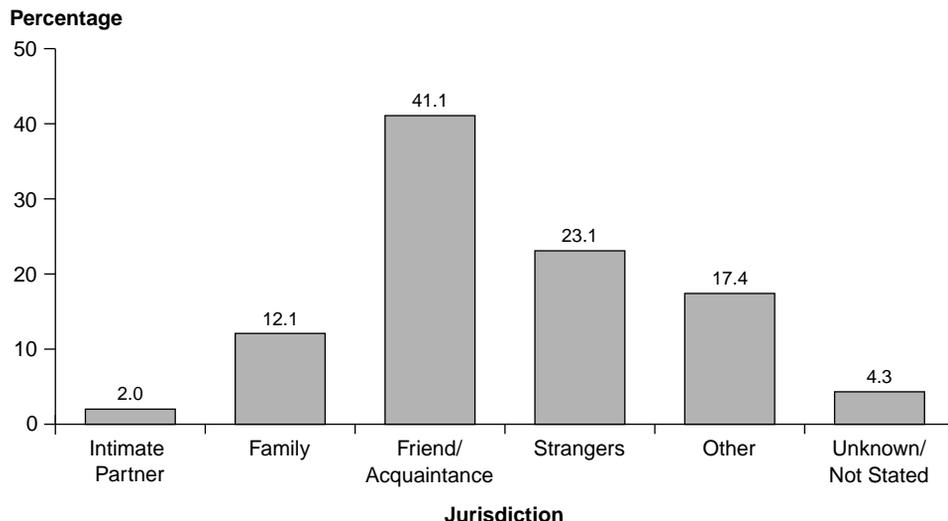
Trends in Male-to-Male Homicide

Between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, 1,390 homicide incidents occurred in Australia that involved males (aged 17 years and over) as both victims and offenders. These amounted to roughly half of all Australian homicides.⁵⁰ Silverman and Kennedy (1987) reported that 54 per cent of cases in Canada involved male offenders taking the lives of male victims, while Wallace (1986) found the figure to be 53 per cent in New South Wales. The distribution of male-on-male homicide incidents has remained relatively stable over the years (Figure 61).

A jurisdictional comparison reveals that the proportion of male-on-male homicide incidents in each Australian jurisdiction are relatively consistent with the national average of about 50 per cent (Figure 62).

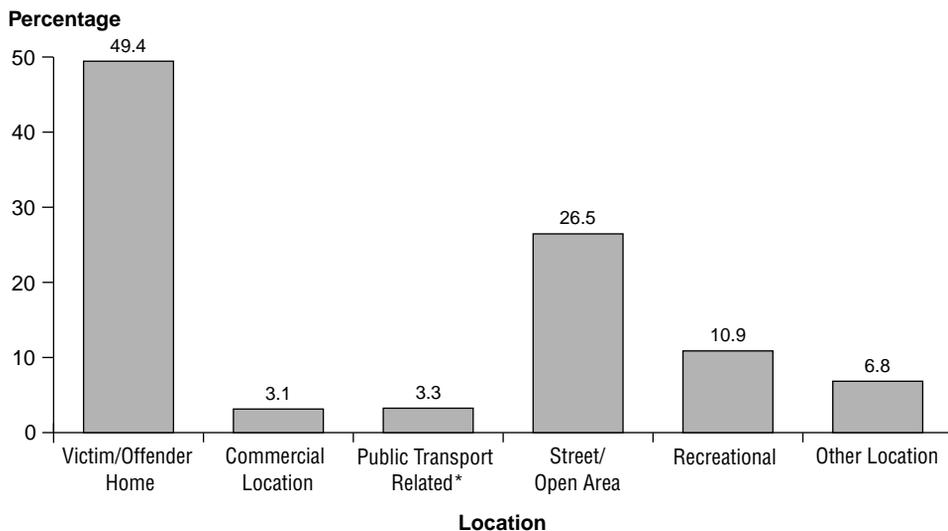
⁵⁰ Calculated based on the number of incidents where an offender had been identified (n = 2803).

Figure 63: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents According to Victim-Offender Relationship (n = 1,390)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 64: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents that occurred between Friends/Acquaintances or Strangers, According to Location of Incident (n = 892)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Circumstances and Characteristics of Masculine Homicide

Following the work of Wallace (1986), Nguyen da Huong and Salmelainen (1992) undertook a 19-year study (1968–1986) of homicide in New South Wales. They reported that when males are killed ($n = 1,040$), they were more likely to be killed by an acquaintance (48.5%) or a stranger (22.1%). They also found that male homicide offenders ($n = 1,422$) were also more likely to kill an acquaintance (42.5%), or a stranger (19.5%). Furthermore, in a Victorian study of homicide, Polk (1994a, p. 58) noted that “male-on-male homicides tend to be spread across a range of relational categories, including ‘strangers’, ‘acquaintances’, and ‘friends’”. Consistent with this research, when male-on-male homicide incidents occur in Australia, they are most likely to occur between friends/acquaintances or strangers (64.2%) (Figure 63).

As male-to-male homicide incidents are rarely found in relationship bonds of family intimacy (Polk 1994a), the following analyses will focus only on male-on-male⁵¹ homicide incidents that occurred between friends/acquaintances and strangers ($n = 892$).

Location of Male-on-Male Killings

As with other forms of homicide, when male friends, acquaintances, or strangers employ lethal violence against one another, they are most likely to do so in a private residence (49.4%). Just over a quarter of male-on-male homicide incidents occurred in a street or open area, and about 1 in 10 occurred in a recreational venue, such as a pub, disco, or restaurant (Figure 64).

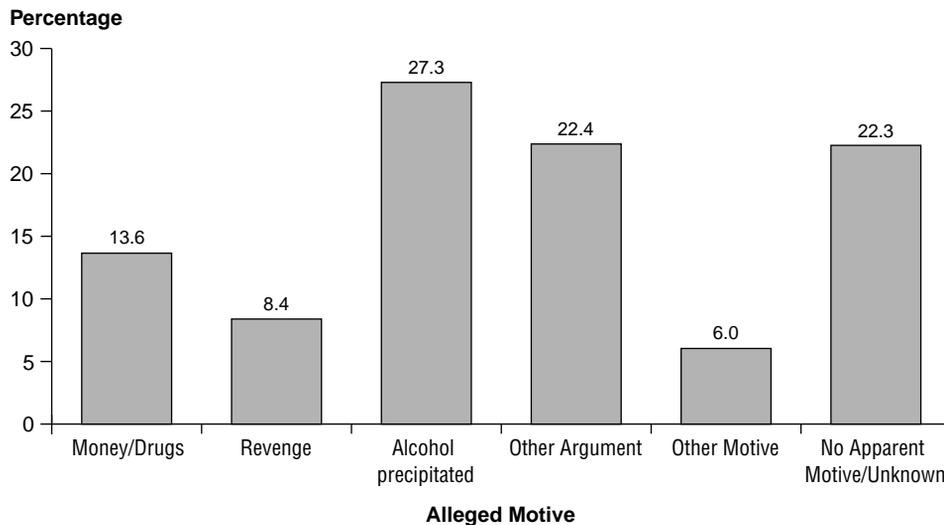
Most male-on-male homicide incidents occurred either on Sunday (18.0%), Friday (16.7%), or Saturday (20.6). Usually late in the evening (31.0%) or during the early hours of the next morning (38.7%).

Alleged Motive

In the present study, of the 892 male-on-male homicide incidents that occurred between friends/acquaintances and strangers, half of these incidents can be characterised as a result of an argument, usually alcohol precipitated (Figure 65).

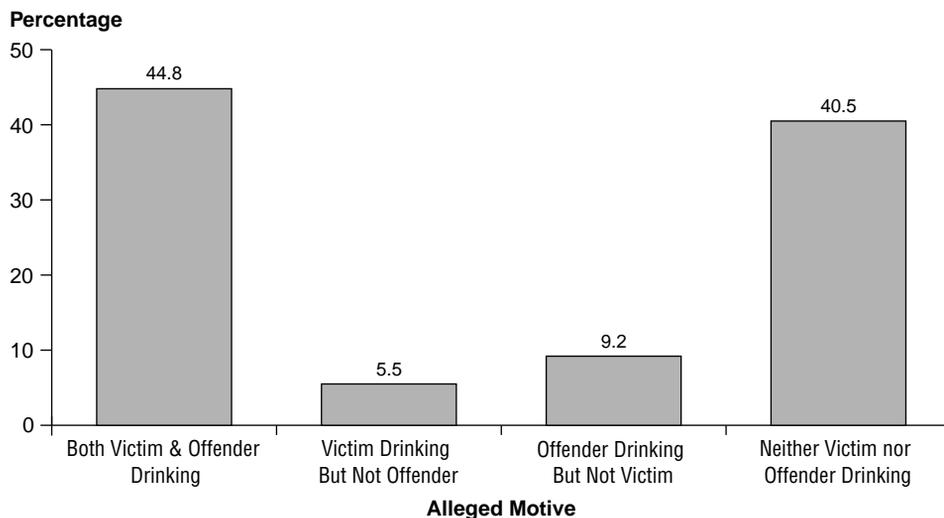
⁵¹ Victims and offenders aged 17 years and over.

Figure 65: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents that occurred between Friends/Acquaintances or Strangers, According to Alleged Motive of Offender (n = 892)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 66: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Male-on-Male Homicide Incidents that occurred between Friends/Acquaintances or Strangers, According to Whether Alcohol was Consumed (n = 892)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

A further 13.6 per cent of these incidents resulted from an argument over money or drugs and 8.4 per cent of male-on-male killings were a result of the offender enacting revenge.

When males kill one another, they are most likely to use a knife or some other sharp instrument (34.5%), or their hands or feet (26.7). Just under a quarter of male-on-male killings involved the use of a firearm (23.3%, n = 206).

Use of Alcohol

Many researchers have commented that alcohol is a common factor present in male-on-male killings (Tomsen et al. 1991; Polk 1994a,b). The present study found that in 3 out of 5 homicide incidents involving males, either the victim or offender, or both had been drinking prior to the lethal encounter (Figure 66). The results of a separate analysis indicates that when both the victim and the offender had been drinking prior to the incident (n = 400), just under half of these incidents occurred in either a street/open area (27.0%) or a recreational venue (17%).

Carcach and Conroy (1999) examined the likelihood of a homicide occurring in Australia from an alcohol-related altercation. They found that homicides involving a male offender and a male victim were 4.9 times as likely to be the result of an alcohol-related altercation as other types of homicide. They also reported that such incidents are also more likely to take place in recreational facilities that are in the same area of residence as the offender, during the evening, and where the victim-offender relationship is friends or acquaintances. In addition, Homel and Tomsen (1993) examining violent and non-violent control drinking establishments in Sydney in 1989 found that “violent incidents in public drinking locations are caused by an interaction of several variables. Chief among these are groups of male strangers, low comfort, high boredom, high drunkenness, and aggressive and unreasonable bouncers” (p. 186).

Employment/Marital Status

It is a common observation that homicide is most likely to be predominantly a lower—or under—class phenomenon (Wolfgang 1958; Wallace 1986). People with more conventional lifestyles, and with adequate financial and social resources, are better able to resolve disputes by means other than violence (Polk 1994a).

In the present study, it was found that 56.7 per cent of male-on-male killings occurred between persons who were not working at the time of the incident. In addition, just under half of these killings (44.8%) occurred between males who were not in a current relationship.⁵²

An examination of the age of both victims and offenders revealed that male-on-male killings usually involve victims who are older than the offender (59.6%). About 5 per cent of male-on-male killings occur between persons who belong to a similar age group.

Given that a majority of male-on-male homicide incidents occurred during the context of an argument of some nature (usually over something trivial, alcohol precipitated, or over money or drugs), the next section will examine the various scenarios leading to lethal outcomes in Australia.

Scenarios of Masculine Homicide

Much homicide research has focussed on men's violence towards women. Although important in itself, very little research has examined men's violence towards other men. Polk (1994b) in his influential book *When Men Kill* has filled this gap by providing us with an insight into the various scenarios where men engage in lethal violence towards their sexual intimates and other men.

Polk (1993, 1994a,b, 1995a) has identified 3 major patterns, or scenarios, in which male-on-male homicide incidents occur. These include:

- Confrontational homicides.
- Conflict resolution homicides.
- Homicides resulting from the course of other crime.

Determining the proportion of male-on-male homicide incidents that can be accurately classified as "confrontational homicides" or "conflict resolution homicides" is not only time consuming, but also problematic for a number of reasons. The main reason is that a quantitative analysis does not allow one to probe deeply into each individual case to determine what is "behind the apparently inconsequential event that generates the heated response

⁵² This includes men who were single, separated (married or de-facto), divorced, or widowed (= 400).

which results in lethal violence" (Polk 1994b).⁵³ Instead, case studies will be used to illustrate the two main scenarios of masculine violence: confrontational and conflict resolution homicides.⁵⁴

Confrontational Homicides

According to Polk (1994a, 1995a) confrontational homicides are essentially "honour contests" between males where an initial insult or provocation, which often appears trivial to someone else, sets up the circumstances conducive to a physical fight occurring. This sometimes escalates to the point where the violence becomes lethal. These killings tend to be spontaneous, often are set in public or leisure venues such as pubs, discos, streets, parks, trains, and nearly always involve working or underclass males.

Polk (1994a, p. 180) noted that:

In confrontational killings, the key questions concerned the origins of the conflict ... The critical question would be whether or not there was any evidence of the violence being precipitated by an insult, jostle, or other unplanned exchange. Did the violence proceed spontaneously from an insult to the honour of the participants?

Luckenbill (1977) referred to these confrontational homicides as "character contests" in which participants attempt to save face at each other's expense. Accordingly, these "character contests" are likely to be characterised by a combination of interactional properties that facilitate their violent conclusions.

These properties include:

- The perceived attack by one party upon some aspect of the character of the other.
- The attempt by the other to engage in some mildly aggressive identity-saving retaliation.

⁵³ Also, computer-based selection of cases for inclusion/exclusion of an analysis is problematic because selecting cases on the basis of motive (that is, argument/altercation) and location of incident (home/recreational venue), and presence of alcohol (victim and offender drinking), may result in cases being inaccurately classified, especially when Polk (1994a) notes that there are some instances where conflict resolution homicides display elements of confrontational homicides (that is, when the final episode might contain a fight).

⁵⁴ See the chapter on "Homicide in the Course of Other Crime" for a discussion of the third scenario of masculine violence, that is, homicides occurring in the course of other crime.

- The first party's sustained or hardened attack.
- The neutrality or the encouragement of bystanders (Luckenbill 1977, cited in Silverman and Kennedy 1993, pp. 90–91).

Wolfgang (1958, pp.188–89) further posits that:

A male is usually expected to defend the name and honor of his mother, the virtue of womanhood ... his age, or his masculinity. Quick resort to physical combat as a measure of daring, courage, or defense of status appears to be the cultural expectation, especially for lower socio-economic class of males of both races.

The following case studies are examples of typical confrontational homicides, where the conflict has built up spontaneously and has escalated into lethal violence. Note that some of the cases occurred in social settings in which large amounts of alcohol are consumed. It has been suggested that, in many cases, who ultimately becomes the victim and the offender, is somewhat incidental (Pernanen 1991).

Case Study Twelve

On the evening of the incident, the victim appears to have been intoxicated and his behaviour towards a number of patrons at the hotel was disruptive. The offender was also drinking at the hotel, to the extent of being "grossly affected by alcohol". During the evening, the victim and the offender were involved in a number of verbal altercations. In each instance, it was the victim who began verbally abusing the offender. As the offender was leaving the hotel, the deceased followed him to the door. They both arrived at the door simultaneously, where the offender allegedly became frightened. They both went outside, where the victim grabbed the offender and placed him in a headlock and began punching him in the vicinity of the jaw and the head. During the fight, the offender pulled out a knife that he carried for protection and fatally stabbed the victim a number of times (R v Wright [1999] New South Wales Supreme Court 1087).

Case Study Thirteen

During the early hours of the morning, the offender and another male were involved in an altercation in a tavern. The victim attempted to interrupt this fight. The offender then turned towards the victim and began verbally abusing him. The victim and the offender were separated by other patrons. The victim was taken to the kitchen in the tavern to calm down. The offender followed and the situation escalated to the point where both parties began to strike one another. The offender then picked up a knife and began chasing the victim around the kitchen. The victim attempted to defend himself, but was stabbed a number of times to the neck, torso and arms.

Another common theme regarding so-called honour contests is when men respond to insults directed at their female companions:

Case Study Fourteen

The 2 offenders approached the victim when he was leaving a Café Bar. They escorted the victim to a nearby sports complex, where they assaulted the victim by punching and kicking him. They were allegedly disturbed by a passer by, so they took the victim to another residence and continued assaulting him. When questioned by the police, the offenders allegedly stated that they attacked the victim after hearing a rumour that he had insulted one of the offender's girlfriends.

Homicide as a Form of Conflict Resolution

Virtually all homicides involve some form of conflict and that the lethal act can be seen as a form of conflict resolution. This section discusses the second scenario whereby males used violence as a form of conflict resolution.

"It appears that in some circumstances, males can be pushed to the point where violence becomes to some degree a planned vehicle for the resolution of personal conflicts with other males" (Polk 1995a, p. 95).

Conflict-resolution homicides are somewhat troublesome because virtually all homicides can be seen as the last state of some conflict. The scenario here is reserved for those cases which can be reached by the following types of questions: was the killing planned and intentional device for resolving some long-standing personal dispute between the victim and the offender? Were there factors present which indicate that it was not possible to resolve the dispute in other ways? Is it clear that the homicide was not spontaneous? (Polk 1994a, p. 180).

According to Polk's (1994a) research, most of the accounts of conflict resolution involved individuals who at an earlier point in their relationship had been reasonably close, as usually indicated by their willingness to share such resources as money, living accommodation, or in some cases drugs. In some cases, it was the sharing of such resources that sparked the lethal dispute. This is reflected in the following case studies:

Case Study Fifteen

Both the victim and the offender were residing in temporary accommodation. The offender had given the victim some money to purchase marijuana. When the victim failed to supply the offender with the drug, the offender formed the opinion that he had been "ripped off" by the victim. After brooding over and discussing the apparent injustice with a companion, the offender finally went to the victim's room, armed with knives, and demanded the return of his money. The victim told the offender to

return later. After consuming some alcohol, the offender returned and knocked on the victim's door and said "I want it now, now, now". The victim emerged from his room, and both the victim and the offender started punching each other. The offender then stabbed the victim in the neck (R v Yuncken [1999], Victorian Supreme Court, 480).

Case Study Sixteen

The victim and the offender had been drinking partners for a number of years. On this occasion, they were both drinking at the offender's residence. A verbal argument erupted over the victim spilling alcohol on the carpet. The victim was asked to leave the premises and was threatened by the offender with a wooden stick. The offender left and returned a short time later with a stick. He then challenged the offender to a fight. The offender grabbed a stick and a knife, and began fighting with the victim on the front lawn. During the fight, the victim was fatally stabbed to death.

Case Study Seventeen

The victim and the offender had been friends for a number of years. A problem in the relationship arose when the offender was suspected of having a romantic attachment to the girlfriend of the victim. The victim and the offender became involved in an argument relating to this matter, with the victim sustaining serious injuries. After recovering from his injuries, the victim began making threatening phone calls to the offender, one occasion allegedly stating that he was going to seriously and sexually harm the offender's son and mother. The offender became enraged and dug up an antique double barrel shot gun that he had in his backyard. The offender retained possession of the firearm 24 hours a day, sometimes carrying it loaded after receiving phone calls from the victim. After seeing the victim on the street, the offender collected his firearm, and followed the victim. The offender approached the victim and asked him whether he was going to continue making threats. When the victim responded "yes", the offender shot him.

Polk (1994a) noted that some cases involve elements of both confrontational and conflict resolution homicides. "While the use of criteria should result in the differentiation of most of the homicides into three predominantly male-on-male scenarios, some small overlap is bound to occur, because it is the nature of these phenomena that elements may mix and fuse" (p. 182). In the following case study, there was a long-standing dispute between house-mates which would imply the need to resolve the conflict. However, as the lethal violence occurred spontaneously during an argument; the homicide did not have the required premeditation or planning of the event needed for the case to be considered a conflict-resolution homicide.

Case Study Eighteen

The victim and the offender had shared an apartment together since leaving high school. During this time, the offender had become quite annoyed with the victim for not cleaning up after himself and, on a number of occasions, over the victim eating food that the offender had paid for. During the course of a few months, the arguments between the victim and the offender began to escalate to the point when on the day of the incident, the offender told the victim that he wanted him to move out. An argument developed and the victim went to take some food out of the freezer. Seeing that the meat that the victim took out belonged to the offender, the offender became enraged and grabbed a knife fatally stabbing the victim.

Why is it that these men in the above case studies have called upon violence as a way of dealing with their dispute? Polk (1995a, p. 99) suggests that this is mainly because:

A factor in the election of violence, and an emergent feature of this scenario, is that these individuals were caught up in lifestyles which put them well out of the margins of conventional society. Both were enmeshed in a lifestyle of unemployment, criminality, and drug use that were definitively not respectable. In fact, they are caught up enough in a subculture of criminality so that their dispute cannot be brought within the boundaries of legitimate dispute resolution procedures.

For example, case study 15 where the dispute involved the victim's failure to supply drugs. Legitimate means of dispute resolution were not available to the offender or the victim. In other words, neither the offender nor the victim could contact police in order to resolve their dispute.

It appears that to these men, violence, in particular lethal violence, was the only means that they saw would resolve their long-standing dispute.

Summary—Males Killing Males: Scenarios of Masculine Violence

During the 10-year period, male-on-male homicide incidents accounted for approximately 50 per cent of all homicide incidents (where an offender was identified).

In summary, male-on-male homicide incidents in Australia are most likely to occur:

- Between friends/acquaintances or strangers.
- Equally in a private residence or some other location, usually a street/open area or a recreational venue.
- On a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday evening during the early hours of the morning.
- As a result of an argument, usually alcohol precipitated.
- When both victim and the offender have consumed alcohol prior to the incident.
- Between men who are not in a current intimate relationship with a third party, and not in paid employment.

Homicidal Intimates

Intimate homicide can be largely characterised as a male dominated act, with females the most likely victims. Australian research indicates that male offenders were responsible for killing approximately 94 per cent of adult female victims and that the vast majority (61%) of these killings occurred in an intimate relational context. Only 11 per cent of adult males were killed by an intimate partner, with a majority of these offenders (84%) being female (Mouzos 1999). International research reports broadly similar patterns: in the United States, among all female murder victims, 29 per cent were killed by their husbands or boyfriends. In contrast, 3 per cent of the male victims were killed by wives or girlfriends (United States Department of Justice 1999). Similarly, in Canada, 4 in 5 spousal victims were women. Males accounted for approximately 22 per cent of the victims killed by an intimate partner (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 1998).

Trends in Intimate Partner Homicide

As noted above (see second chapter “Homicide in Australia: A Brief Overview”, Figure 51), between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, the proportion of homicides involving intimate partners has remained relatively stable at around 21 per cent, with an average of approximately 76 homicide incidents occurring each year involving intimate partners. Just over 3 out of 5 intimate partner homicides (65.8%) occurred between current spouses or defacto partners. A further 1 in 5 intimate partner homicides (22.6%) occurred between separated/divorced spouses or defacto partners. One in 10 intimate partner homicides occurred between current or former boy/girlfriends, and only 2 out of 100 intimate partner homicides occurred between persons of same sex relationships (11 male on male, and 2 female on female).

An examination of the gender relationship between offender and victim in intimate partner homicides confirms the findings of previous research: just over three-quarters of intimate partner homicides in Australia involved a male offender and a female victim (Figure 67). A further 21 per cent occurred between a female offender and a male victim. This gender distribution has remained consistent over time (see Carcach and James 1998).

Furthermore, in a study of intimate partner homicide in Australia (Carcach and James 1998), it was reported that after controlling for the effect of other factors, homicide incidents where the offender was male and the victim was

female were 10.7 times more likely to involve intimate partners than those where the offender was female and the victim was male.

Study after study has reconfirmed the notion that women are most at risk of homicide victimisation by an intimate partner (Browne and Williams 1993; Kellermann and Mercy 1992; Maguire and Pastore 1996; Silverman and Kennedy 1993; Carcach and James 1998; Mouzos 1999).

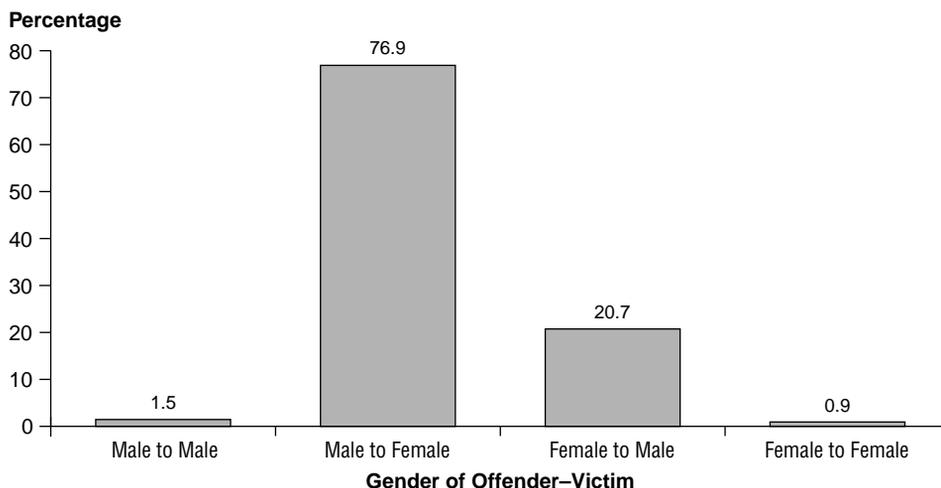
In an Australian study of the intentional killing of adult women (femicide), it was found that a woman was most likely to be killed:

- By an intimate partner.
- As a result of a domestic altercation.
- In some private residence.
- With a knife or some other sharp instrument.

The study also reported that an increased likelihood of adult female victimisation was associated with a number of significant factors:

- Labour force participation (female victim and/or male offender not working).
- Victim and offender involved in an intimate relationship.
- Victim spending most of her time at home (Mouzos 1999).

Figure 67: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Gender of Offender–Victim in Intimate Partner Homicides (n = 759)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Interestingly, employed women are less at risk from homicide victimisation than women not in the workforce, suggesting that access to employment opportunities and economic independence may reduce the time that these women spend in or near the home, thereby reducing exposure to violence from an intimate partner (Mouzos 1999).

Women's routines are bound to play a part in their role as victim. The domestic scene routinized behaviour as it relates to many women who are objects of violence. The violence occurs in the home and an intimate partner is the offender. The problems that precipitate the violence are domestic in nature (Silverman and Kennedy 1993, p. 204).

In addition to an overview of lethal intimate partner violence, the purpose of this section is to discuss certain issues that have not been previously covered at the national level in the study of homicidal intimates (see Mouzos 1999, p. 38). This includes information on the exact nature of domestic arguments between intimate partners, whether there was a prior history of domestic violence and whether any AVO had been taken out against the offender. Such information is potentially useful as a diagnostic tool for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence prior to it escalating to lethal violence.

Arguments of a Lethal Nature—What Are They About?

With the revision of the NHMP data collection form, since July 1996, additional data on "arguments of a domestic nature" have now been collected. Although, in a majority of cases (72.5%), this information was not recorded (sometimes not even law enforcement personnel are fully aware of the exact factor precipitating the lethal act), such information may still be useful in gauging the reasons behind these lethal arguments. We know that 4 out of 5 victims of intimate partner homicide are killed as a result of a domestic argument, but we need to know what that argument was about.

According to NHMP data (where "type of argument" was known, n = 52), it seems that most of the lethal arguments between intimates were:

- Over the offender's knowledge or suspicion of infidelity—in other words, the offender's jealousy or possessiveness (21.2%).
- Consumption of alcohol or drugs (21.2%).
- Lack of financial resources—money (9.6%).
- Custody or parenting of children (9.6%).

A variety of other reasons (40.4%) were also noted, such as domestic violence, alleged sexual abuse of their children and other trivial reasons such as the preparation of food, the signing of residency papers, walking too slowly or refusing to return home.

In accord with these findings, Trimboli and Bonney (1997) in an evaluation of the New South Wales AVO Scheme indicated that the most common triggers of violent behaviour, as reported by persons (subjects) who had sought the AVO, was the defendant's lack of control over the subject (jealousy and possessiveness—25.6%) and the defendant's consumption of alcohol (25.2%).

These findings seem to reinforce the notion that intimate partner homicides are “the relatively rare and extreme manifestations of the same basic conflicts that inspire sub-lethal marital violence on a larger scale” (Wilson and Daly 1992, p. 93).

History of Domestic Violence

Contrary to media portrayals of intimate homicide that it is a sudden spontaneous act of extreme violence, research indicates that a majority of incidents occur in the context of a previous, usually escalating, history of abuse (Hore et al. 1996). Much research into intimate partner homicide provides confirmation of the apparent link between domestic homicide and domestic violence. For example, Wallace (1986) found that a history of physical abuse was evident in almost half (48%) of the spouse homicides, and that the homicide had been preceded by at least 1 incident of prior physical abuse. She also found that in over half (52%) of the cases where the offender was female, the homicide incident occurred in response to an immediate threat or attack by the male victim. Similarly, Easteal's (1993) study of adult sexual intimates in New South Wales and Victoria between 1988 and 1990 found that approximately 82 per cent of the intimate partner homicides had a prior history of physical violence. When females were the offender, 10 out of 11 women had experienced a history of domestic violence prior to the homicide.

More recently, Hore et al. (1996) in a study of domestic homicide between 1987 and 1990 in Victoria reported that in just under half of the spousal homicide cases (49%), domestic violence was evident in the relationship prior to the homicide. However, the authors noted that this should be regarded as a very conservative estimate, as the information was not always recorded (a quarter of the cases sampled were lacking information on prior

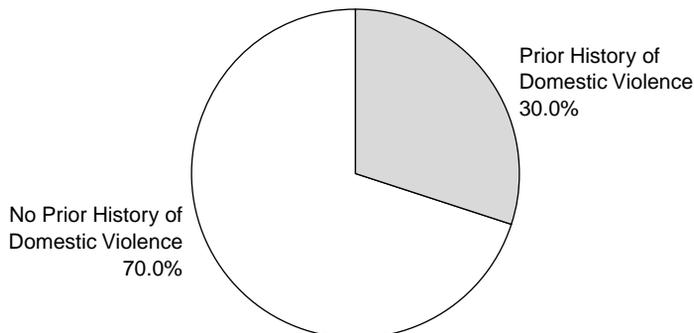
violence). In these reported studies, it seems that the fatal outcome was a result of beatings that went too far (Browne 1997).

Based on information recorded in the NHMP (from 1996/97 onwards), we are now able to determine the proportion of intimate partner homicides where there was evidence of a prior history of domestic violence. However, as Wallace (1986, p. 110) pointed out “domestic violence is a very difficult phenomenon to quantify, occurring as it does privately”. According to some estimates, only about half of domestic violence incidents are ever reported to police (Langan and Innes 1986). Therefore as NHMP data are extracted from police records, information regarding a prior history of domestic violence may not necessarily be recorded, thereby underestimating the extent of previous domestic violence in the relationship.

In the last three most recent years (1996/97 to 1998/99), there were 193 intimate partner homicides. In 30 per cent of these cases, there was documented evidence of a prior history of domestic violence (Figure 68). In addition, 4 out of 5 intimate partner homicides where there was evidence of a prior history of domestic violence involved a female victim.

Moreover, in only 3 per cent of intimate partner homicides ($n = 5$) there was evidence that an AVO had been taken out against a male offender.⁵⁵ Other research suggests that this proportion may actually be higher. For example, since 1993, the Queensland Police Service’s Domestic Violence Homicide

Figure 68: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1996–30 June 1999: Proportion of Intimate Partner Homicides (n = 170)* by Whether there was a Prior History of Domestic Violence



* Excludes 23 cases where there was no available information.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

⁵⁵ Although, this maybe an underestimate, as information on whether there was a current AVO may not have been recorded in Police Offence Reports.

Project (DVHP) has been monitoring domestic violence “spousal”⁵⁶ homicides that have occurred in Queensland. This project was initiated mainly as a result of a perceived lack of post-event analysis of domestic homicides and the need to evaluate the application and the effectiveness of police procedures in dealing with domestic violence generally (personal communication, Senior Sergeant Dale Murray, State Domestic Violence Coordinator, Queensland Police Service, 10 December 1999).

This monitoring has included whether or not the victim had a current or expired Domestic Violence Order (DVO), current application for an order and whether they had contact with police prior to their death. According to the DVHP, between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1998, there were 76 recorded spousal homicide incidents. During the 5-year period, in just over 1 out of 4 spousal homicide incidents (30.3%) in Queensland there was evidence of a current DVO, or current application. A further 2.6 per cent of spousal homicide incidents there had been a previous DVO.

The DVHP also records information on how long after a DVO had been issued did the spousal homicide incident occur. Based on this information, a spousal homicide incident in Queensland occurred on average 10 months after a DVO was issued. In one particular incident, the homicide took place just 3 days after the order was issued.

Research indicates that there is indeed merit to this legal tool for combating domestic violence and, in some cases, the escalation of violence to lethal violence (Young et al. 1999; Carlson et al. 1999; Chaudhuri and Daly 1992; Grau et al. 1985; Harrell and Smith 1996; Klein 1996). Although protective orders are associated with a reduction of abuse for many women, Carlson et al. (1999) found that about a quarter of the women who obtained an order were re-abused after the order was issued. This finding, together with the fact that just over a quarter of the persons killed in Queensland had taken out a DVO prior to the incident, indicates that the determinants of domestic violence and spousal homicide are very complex in nature.

Nonetheless, based on the DVHP, the Queensland Police Service has established procedures to investigate and record the application of any domestic violence policy/procedures/orders related to homicides with the

⁵⁶ As defined section 12 Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 9 (QLD) 1989: A “spouse” means either one of a man and a woman: (a) who are or have been married to each other; (b) who, although not married to each other, are residing, or have resided together, as husband and wife; or (c) who are the biological parents of a child (whether or not they are, or have been, married or are residing or have resided together).

view to identifying trends. The availability of such information is crucial in informing future policy strategies in the prevention of spousal homicides.

Given the difficulty in accessing information on the extent of prior physical violence in a relationship that results in homicide, determining the extent of prior psychological abuse would be considerably more difficult. A number of researchers have shown that some women object, fear, and resent psychological abuse and its effects more than those of physical abuse (Follingstad et al. 1990; Herbert et al. 1991; Walker 1984; Arias and Pape 1999). For example, in a sample of 234 women with a history of battering, Follingstad and her colleagues (1990) found that only three of the participants had never experienced any form of psychological abuse. Seventy-two per cent of the women in this sample reported that they experienced psychological abuse more negatively than physical abuse. Women who experienced psychological abuse more negatively, relative to those who experienced physical abuse more negatively, reported more fear of the partner, shame, loss of self-esteem, depression, and anxiety.

Finkelhor (1983) reported a number of primary factors associated with the occurrence of domestic homicide.

These included:

- History of violence.
- Frequency and severity of violence over time.
- Addiction to illegal drugs.
- The practice of threatening death rituals.
- Homicidal and/or suicidal ideation.
- Access to weapons.
- Final factor: She says, "I'm leaving" (Carrillo 1995 cited in Burnley et al. 1998).

The practice of threatening death rituals can be considered a form of psychological abuse. Survivors of domestic homicide have reported being subjected to a process of dehumanisation and subjugation. Part of this process may include the use of death rituals to control the victim. Death rituals are considered a part of the process or homicidal route (Burnley et al. 1998). As the violence level escalates, so does the pattern in which it is administered. The abuser first talks about weapons, then displays weapons

and brandishes weapons, all while making threats to the victim. In one example from the United States, the abuser took his partner for a drive out into a deserted rural area in the middle of winter, forced her to disrobe in the snow and told her that if she tried to leave him he would bring her out here again and kill her (Burnley et al. 1998).

Death rituals suggest a very dangerous level of implied and actual violence. The victim is forced to live in fear of her life, even when her partner is displaying affection. The more death rituals are carried out, the more likely the abuser is to finally carry out his threats (Burnley et al. 1998).

In a study of survivors of domestic violence, Bergen (1998) reported that many women have decided to leave a violent relationship when they feared for their lives because of the escalating violence; 60 per cent of the women in the study (sample of 40 women) indicated that their partners had threatened to kill them at some point in their relationships. For some women, this happened routinely; for others, this threat was what caused them to end their relationships.

The Women's Coalition Against Family Violence (1994, p. 23) analysed case study material relating to 9 women and 3 children killed in a domestic context. This compelling research highlights the notion that

men's violence towards women and children is considered an exercise of power aimed at maintaining control over them. When a man who is violent towards his partner and children has his control challenged, he will often inflict more violence to "teach them a lesson", to remind them "who is boss", and to intimidate and force them into complying with his wishes. The ultimate expression of his desire to control is the act of murder.

In other words, in a majority of intimate partner homicides, the killing was not a one-off aberration, but was preceded by years of prior abuse.

Recent research has also demonstrated that being a victim of violence by a partner (current or former) or another male contributes to enhancing women's perceptions of safety in the wider community. This study found that:

Women with a partner, in particular women in disadvantaged groups, may develop higher levels of emotional and economic dependence, which constrains their daily lives by avoiding certain places or activities perceived to be dangerous ... Women's fear of violence is real and is

associated with actual assessments of personal or other's safety (Carcach and Mukherjee 1999, pp. 4–5).

The following case studies illustrate these observations.

Case Study Nineteen

The victim and the offender had been living together for approximately 4 years. During this period, the offender had physically assaulted the victim many times. The victim and her child had left the offender and gone to live elsewhere on six separate occasions because of the offender's violence. The day after the victim had given birth to a baby that survived only a few minutes, the victim was seen with a black eye which was reportedly a result of the victim "walking into the offender's elbow".

On another occasion, the victim had her head hit against a microwave oven. After this incident, the victim left the offender again and went to stay elsewhere. The victim also took out an intervention order. The offender admitted to physically assaulting the victim and he subsequently attended anger management classes. The victim returned to live with the offender.

The victim became pregnant once again and she went into premature labour, delivering a still born baby. Relatives of the victim reported observing bruising on the victim the day that she was brought into hospital. On that day, the offender is also reported to have said "there'll be more of it when you get home". Shortly after these incidents, the victim was admitted into hospital with severe head injuries. The victim died as a result of the injuries sustained from the physical violence inflicted by the offender (99/296).

Case Study Twenty

The victim and the offender had been married for a number of years. Throughout their relationship, various family members were aware that the victim was quite frightened of the offender. The offender had allegedly made comments to the victim stating that "if she left him he would track her down and kill her and he would cut her up and feed her to the dogs" (Peterson 1999, p. 9). The offender allegedly monitored "what the victim did, whom the victim saw, where the victim went, what the victim wore, who visited their home, and how the victim behaved at family occasions. The victim had apparently disappeared without making contact with family or friends, and was allegedly found 3 years later by police buried near the home's foundations (Peterson 1999).

Case Study Twenty-One

The offender attended the local police station and reported his wife as a missing person. A police search of the offender's residence, located a large quantity of blood under a piece of carpet in the main bedroom, where the offender and his wife slept. A further search of the residence located a roll of carpet in a locked shed at the side of

the house. The piece of carpet that was covered in blood in the room and the roll of carpet in the locked shed were scientifically examined and it was established that the cut in both pieces of the carpet matched. Similarly, the offender's wristwatch was examined and found to contain traces of blood. This blood was matched with the blood found in the room, both believed to be the same as the victim's. Throughout the investigation statements were obtained from witnesses in relation to domestic violence and the offender's obsessive jealous behaviour towards the victim.

Summary—Homicidal Intimates

The present findings and those of other studies seem to suggest that a common correlate in family violence and intimate partner homicide is male sexual jealousy and a feeling of ownership of their partners. Many studies suggest that a history of domestic violence in a relationship is an important risk factor in such homicides, although some international studies have reported no difference in the homicide risks of couples who have come to police attention due to incidents of domestic violence and those who have not (Sherman et al. 1991).

However, as Hore et al. (1996) suggest, in some cases protection orders can do little to prevent a determined killer. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the importance of issuing AVO orders to persons in need of protection, or commend the abandonment of preventative strategies aimed at enhancing the safety of women. The main purpose of these preventative strategies⁵⁷ would be to reduce the risk of homicide victimisation where the risk is greatest.

⁵⁷ See the last chapter "Concluding Discussion: Preventing Homicidal Encounters—Directions for the New Millennium" for an outline of some of the intimate partner homicide interventions.

Homicidal Women

Perhaps the least contentious proposition one can advance within the discipline of criminology is that women are more law abiding than men (Naffine 1987, p. 1).

Overwhelmingly, research into homicide has focussed mostly on men as offenders of homicide, and rightly so; “across time and cultures, violent crime, in particular homicide, has been predominantly committed by men” (Alder and Polk 1997, p. 1, see also Wolfgang 1958; Daly and Wilson 1988; Polk 1994a). However, men *do not* commit all homicides. A small number of women commit homicide, and the circumstances are often remarkable and complex.

A number of researchers have suggested that as women’s role in Western society has moved towards greater equality and assertiveness, women may also have become more aggressive (Lawrence 1985; Adler 1975). Others suggest that as there have been changes to divorce laws making it easier to end a marriage, stress should be dissipated and circumstances that would otherwise lead to violent or fatal behaviours should be circumvented (Gillis 1986). On the other hand, some researchers have observed that there has been a decline in the number of homicides committed by women against their male partners and an increase in the number of women who have killed strangers and others (both male and female) with whom they have no familial ties (Spunt et al.1996).

The main aim of this section will be to examine women who kill in Australia; to identify who are their victims, and under what circumstances women engage in lethal behaviour. Most importantly, however, it is necessary to determine whether there have been any significant changes over time in the offending patterns of women who kill.

Trends in Offending

The findings presented in the second chapter “Homicide in Australia: A Brief overview” indicated that between 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999, there were 3481 homicide offenders, of which 437 were female (12.8%). Similarly, an analysis of offending patterns over the 10-year period (see Figure 39) revealed that during the last 3 years (1996/97–1998/99) the proportion of homicide offenders who were female has increased slightly from 12.1 per cent (89/90–95/96) to 14.7 per cent (96/97–98/99). However, there was a note of caution regarding the interpretation of this finding.

Location of Incident

Most studies of homicidal women report that women characteristically kill their victim in a private residence (Formby 1986; Goetting 1987; Mann 1996). The NHMP data concur with those of previous reports that a majority of homicides committed by women took place in a private residence (76.2 %). The second most common location for homicide by females in Australia was in a street or open area (14.8%). Very rarely do women kill in a recreational area (0.9%).

Choice of Weapon

Mann (1996) suggests that, traditionally, women have generally been thought of as more indirect in terms of the means that they have used to kill, usually methods that place distance between the offender and the victim. For this reason, poisoning in one form or another has been associated with women who commit homicide. It seems that times may have changed. In the present study, during the 10-year period there were only 4 cases where the female offender used poison to kill the victim. In recent years, drugs ("hot shot" injections) have also been used as a means to commit homicide. There were only five reported cases over the 10-year period where a female used drugs as the weapon.

Nowadays when women kill, the preferred weapon (as is also for male homicide offenders) is a knife or some other sharp instrument (49.0%). Only about 12.4 per cent of the victims of female offenders were killed with a firearm. In comparison, other research indicates that women in the United States are increasingly turning to firearms to commit homicide. For example, firearms were used by 72.6 per cent of the female homicide offenders studied by McClain (1982).

Why do Women Kill?

Just under half of the women who killed (where motive was known n = 326) did so as a result of a domestic altercation with the victim (n = 141, 43.3%). Approximately 14 per cent of victims were killed as a result of the offender's jealousy or the termination of a relationship (n = 46). When arguments occurred between friends or acquaintances, the homicide was usually alcohol related (n = 31, 9.5%). Very few women kill in order to seek revenge (n = 17, 5.2%).

Whom do Women Kill?

During the 10-year period, female homicide offenders were responsible for the death of 420 victims, and these deaths occurred during the course of 404 homicide incidents. A majority of these incidents involved single victims (96.5%); there were only 14 incidents involving 2 or more victims. Just under 1 in 10 homicide incidents perpetrated by female offenders were committed during the course of other crime (9.2%). Just over three-quarters of female perpetrated homicide incidents that occurred in the course of other crime, occurred in the commission of robbery.

Study after study has reconfirmed the findings that males are most likely the victims of both male and female perpetrated homicide (Wolfgang 1958; Ward et al. 1969; Wilbanks 1982; Zimring et al. 1983). As expected, the current data indicate that of the 420 victims of female perpetrated homicide, 77.4 per cent were male and 22.6 per cent were female.

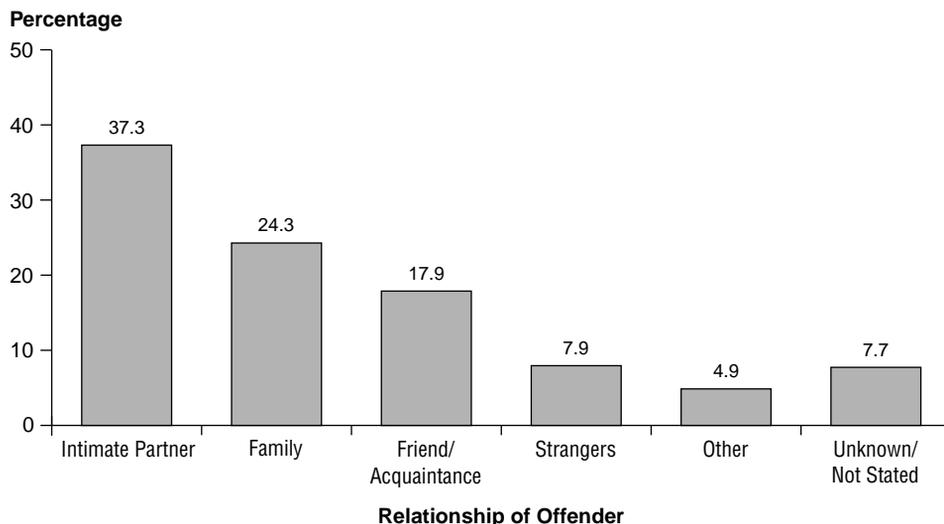
O'Brien, R.M. (1988) examined three models constructed to help explain gender relations in homicide. The first model assumed the sex of the offender and the victim were based solely on the relative proportion of males and females in the United States population (male = 48.7%, female = 51.3%). The second model assumed that males are more likely to be offenders than females, but that the sex of the victims is based on their proportion within the population. The third model assumed that the sex of neither the offender or the victim is a random event.

O'Brien, R.M. (1988) tested these models using Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) data from 1986 and concluded that the second model is the most useful and that events in which males kill males most frequently occurred because males are more prone to violence and more likely to interact in all-male groups as compared with females. He further reasoned that when females killed, males were most likely to be the victims for two reasons:

- Female homicides most likely occurred in domestic situations where mixed-gender groups were present.
- Because of the relatively greater strength of males, females were more likely to use more lethal forms of violence on them to prevent retaliation.

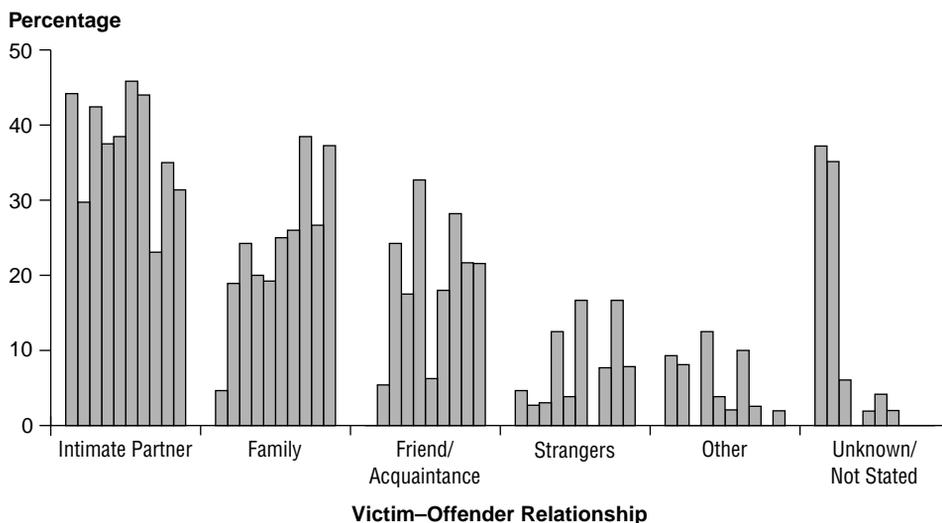
Analyses of NHMP data indicate that when women kill, they are most likely to kill a member of their own family (Figure 69). Just under 2 out of 5 female homicide offenders killed their intimate partner, the overwhelming majority of whom were male (95.8%). A quarter of female homicide offenders killed

Figure 69: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Relationship between the Victim and Female Offender (n = 453)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 70: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Trends in Victim-Female Offender Relationships (n = 453)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

other family members (24.3%). In 3 out of 4 cases, this was usually the offender's custodial child.

Approximately 18 per cent of female homicide offenders killed a friend or acquaintance. Only 8 per cent of female homicide offenders killed a person who was not known to them, in comparison to approximately 17 per cent of male homicide offenders.

From the victim-offender relationship of intimates to that of strangers, women consistently killed more males than females. Blum and Fisher (1978, p. 192) suggest:

While murder in general is a very personalised crime, in the vast majority of cases taking place between people who know each other, female murder appears to be an especially intimate act. That is, women are more likely than men to murder another family member—particularly a husband or child ...

Trends in Victim-Female Offender Relationships

As previously noted, there has been a decline in the United States in the number of women killing their male partners and an increase in women killing other persons with whom they have no familial ties (Spunt et al. 1996). An examination of victim-female offender relationships across a 10-year period in Australia reveals that although there has been a decline in women killing intimate partners, this decline was not also reflected in the proportion of women who killed other family members (Figure 70). There appear to be marked variations on a year-to-year basis in the proportion of female homicide offenders who have killed a friend/acquaintance or a stranger. As in the United States, in recent years Australia has also experienced a decline in intimate partner homicides perpetrated by women, although we have not experienced a subsequent increase in non-familial homicides committed by women.

The declining trend in the intimate partner homicides in the United States has been linked *inter alia* to factors such as declining domesticity, the improved economic status of women and increases in the availability of domestic violence services (Carcach and James 1998, Zimring et al. 1983, Dugan et al. 1997). These factors might also explain the decline in intimate partner homicides perpetrated by women in Australia (although one must bear in mind that there are cultural and social differences between the two countries). For instance, according to Australian labour force statistics

(ABS 1999b), the proportion of females in the Australian labour force has gradually increased from 1986 to 1998 (48.3% in 1986 to 53.9% in 1998). On the other hand, the labour force participation of males has marginally declined during this period (75.9% in 1986 to 73.0% in 1998).

Scenarios of Women who Kill

The following section will present brief case studies to illustrate the diverse circumstances in which women engage in lethal violence.

Case Study Twenty-Two

The female offender attended to a local police station and informed the police officer that she had allegedly hit her husband over the head with an axe and that he was dead at their home. During the police interview, the offender allegedly said that she had been mentally abused by the victim over a long period. She recalled a recent incident when the victim had allegedly cut her hair against her will.

Case Study Twenty-Three

The offender had offered money to another person to kill her husband because she had stood to gain financially from his death. In the judge's summing up of the circumstances of the case, Justice Hampel said that "This is not a case of a desperate, trapped woman or a case of highly emotionally charged circumstances in which people react and kill. This is a case of a plan to kill, when each of you (there were 2 offenders) had ample time to realise and reconsider what you were about to do" (R v Chatzidimitriou and Freeman [1999], Victorian Supreme Court, 280). The victim was found in his car after it had been retrieved from over the side of a cliff. The victim had drowned.

Case Study Twenty-Four

The offender allegedly brought her young child to the bedroom and lay the child on the bed. The offender then allegedly took one of the pillows from the bed and placed it over the child's face, suffocating the child. The offender then started to walk around the house, pacing backward and forward. The offender's spouse arrived home, police and an ambulance were summoned, but the child was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital.

Case Study Twenty-Five

The offender, who did not want anyone to know that she was pregnant, gave birth and then allegedly cut up the baby with a sharp instrument. The offender then buried the dismembered baby and tried to conceal the body with leaves. A small child subsequently discovered part of the victim's leg which had been unearthed by neighbourhood dogs. It is alleged that the baby was alive for several minutes and died from multiple injuries.

Case Study Twenty-Six

The victim was a doctor who was requested by the 4 offenders (including 1 female) to attend and see a possible patient. Upon arriving, the victim was beaten to death with a steering lock. The victim's body was removed from the residence and thrown in a parking area. The offenders then drove off in the victim's vehicle.

Summary—Homicidal Women

In summary, female perpetrated homicide is most frequently intersexual. In other words, women are most likely to kill males than other females. Women are also more likely to kill (in descending order of frequency) husbands, ex-husbands and defacto partners, and lovers, followed by children and other relatives. Very few women kill strangers. Typically, when women kill a male intimate partner, they kill someone with which they have experienced a long history of violent conflict. Most importantly, however, just over 1 out of 10 homicide offenders were women, whereas just under 4 out of 10 victims of homicide were women. This indicates that women are over-represented as victims of homicide compared to their engagement in violent offending.

The Killing of Children

There is no doubt that all homicide incidents are tragic and leave devastating consequences in their wake. However, there is probably no other type of homicide that is as disturbing and produces the greatest loss in terms of productive years of life as the killing of children. These homicides are often referred to as “sentinel” events in society (Greenland 1987), “that is, no matter how few there may be in absolute numbers, each incident engenders such a degree of public outrage that each attains a special significance” (Strang 1996, p. 2). Child homicide is “the killing of children either directly or through deliberate abuse, injury or neglect” (Unnithan 1997, p. 315). For the purposes of this study, child homicide will encompass children killed between birth and 14 years of age.

Many researchers view child homicide as an extreme phenomenon along a continuum of child abuse, an outcome that “is often the result of prior episodes involving lesser forms of abuse” (Fiala and LaFree 1988, p. 433). This may be the case in some instances of child homicide, as will be illustrated later in this chapter. However, Gelles (1991, p. 69) points out that child homicide can alternatively be conceptualised as a distinctive form of homicide: “a distinct form of violence that requires a distinct explanation”.

Research into the unlawful killing of children has identified seven well-defined syndromes (Wilkey et al. 1982, p. 32):

- “Neonaticide” involving the death of an infant during or immediately after the birth (within the first 24 hours—Arbolede-Florez 1976) associated with concealment of both pregnancy and parturition.
- “Infanticide” involving the killing an infant under the age of 12 months by the mother.
- “Euthanasia” involving the killing of an abnormal child by a parent.
- The end result of non-accidental injury assaults (physical abuse).
- The deprived and starved child (child neglect).
- Murder-suicide where an adult kills 1 or more family members and then commits suicide.
- Murder, including killing in the context of a sexual assault.

Although it may seem that these syndromes are exhaustive of the different forms of child homicide, it is interesting to note a distinctive case recorded in the NHMP in which the child's death was a result of an iatrogenic outcome.⁵⁸

It should be noted that the number of child homicides recorded in the NHMP database represent the number officially known to police. It is now widely acknowledged that there is a large "dark figure" of child homicide—that is, that some deaths may not be accurately recorded as such (Creighton 1992). These cases may not have been recognised as homicides, leading to misclassification of the manner of death as either undetermined, accidental, or natural (as in the case of a homicide misdiagnosed as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)). For example, in 1997 11.3 per cent of infant deaths (under 12 months of age) were as a result of "Sudden Death, Cause Unknown"⁵⁹ (Category 798, ABS 1997a). Across a 15-year period (1982–1996), SIDS on average accounted for 19.9 per cent of all infant deaths, and only 3.5 per cent of all child deaths.⁶⁰ It is possible that a proportion of these deaths are deliberately inflicted but escape detection.

The killing of a child is a crime of considerable ease, both from the standpoint of committing the act and of subsequently escaping detection. The act is generally committed in the privacy of the home, in the absence of any witnesses (Myers 1967, p. 213).

Hence, the current NHMP figures may under-represent the true incidence of child homicide in Australia.

Trends in Child Homicide

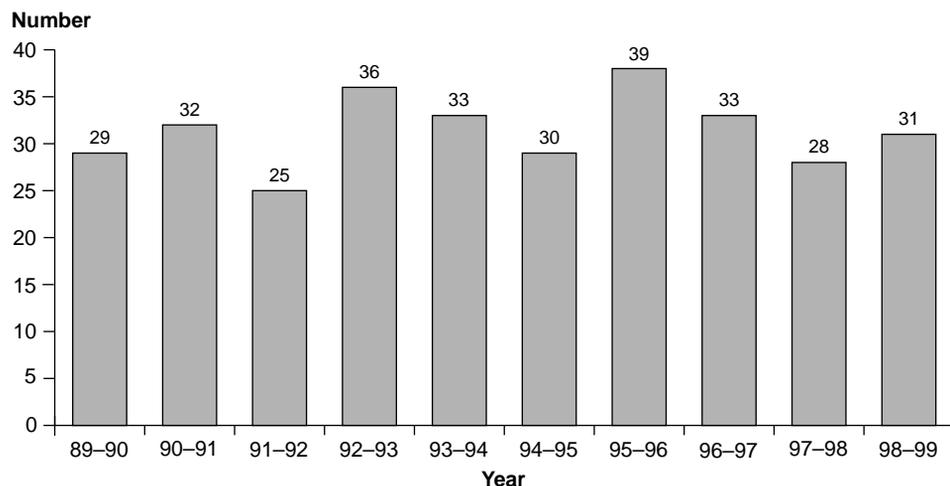
Between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, a total of 270 child homicide incidents occurred, perpetrated by 287 identified offenders and resulting in the death of 316 children under the age of 15 years. This figure represents around 8.6 per cent of all homicides in Australia. During the 10-year period, the number of child homicide victims has remained relatively stable, despite the year-to-year fluctuations (Figure 71).

⁵⁸ The child was taken to the hospital with a burnt palm, and the doctor gave the child an injection of morphine. Within 24 hours of the injection, the child died as a result of "acute morphine toxicity".

⁵⁹ This includes: 798.0—SIDS, 798.1 instantaneous death, 798.2 death occurring in less than 24 hours from onset of symptoms, not otherwise explained, 798.9 unattended death (World Health Organisation (WHO) 1977).

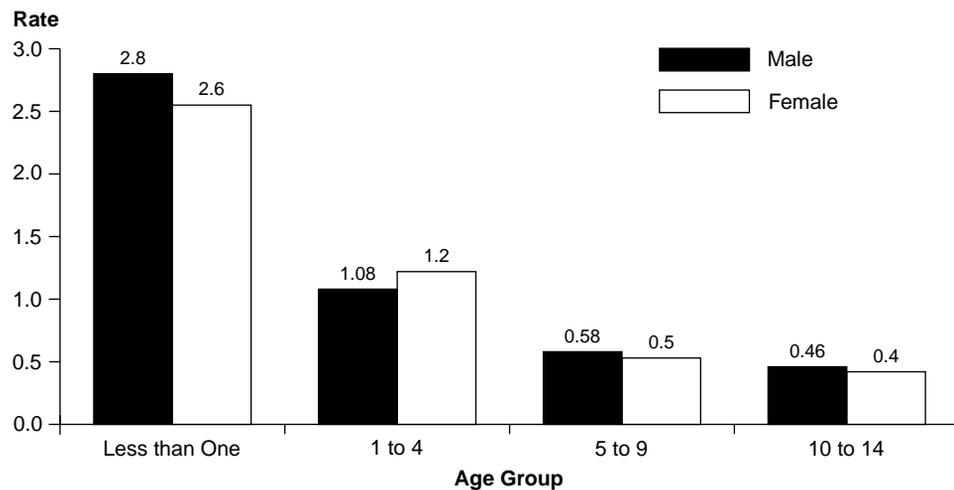
⁶⁰ The ABS definition of child refers to children aged 1 to 4 years.

Figure 71: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Child Homicide Victims (n = 316)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 72: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Child Homicide, Victimization Rates per 100,000 Relevant Population, by Gender and Age Group (n = 316)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Strang (1996) reported that between July 1989 and December 1993, 20 per cent of child homicide incidents involved multiple victims. In contrast, approximately 12 per cent of child homicide incidents over a 10-year period involved multiple victims. This indicates that there has been a decline the proportion of child homicide incidents involving multiple victims.

Gender and Age

The highest rate of child homicide victimisation in Australia is less than 1 year of age (Figure 72). This finding is consistent with international research that has found that the risk of homicide was greater during the first year of life than at any other equivalent life span (Chew et al. 1999; Christoffel 1983; Christoffel et al.; Strang 1996). As reported in the second chapter “Homicide in Australia: A Brief Overview” (see Table 3), the highest risk of homicide victimisation for females was less than 1 year of age (average rate of 2.6 per 100,000 population).

In comparison to the overall gender distribution of all homicide victims (63% male, 37% female) whereby males account for a higher proportion of homicide victims, it appears that there is not much difference in the gender distribution of child homicide victims. Across the 10-year period, 51.6 per cent of child homicide victims were male and 48.4 per cent were female.⁶¹

Circumstances and Characteristics of Child Homicide

Child homicide will differ from other types of homicide. The purpose of this section is to determine how the killing of children differs from the killing of adult men and women.

Homicide generally occurs within residential premises (60.2%). Similarly, when children are killed they are most likely to be killed in a residential location (71.4%).

Weapon

The force required to assault a child is low compared to a teenage or an adult homicide, due to the high vulnerability of children (Smitley 1998). Research suggests that the homicide of infants and young children is infrequently accomplished with the use of firearms, knives, or other

⁶¹ Some researchers have found that male children are at a greater risk of being killed than female children (Margolin 1990; Christoffel 1983; Christoffel et al. 1983; Jason 1983).

weapons commonly classified as dangerous (Finkelhor 1997). Rather, children under the age of 5 years are most likely to be beaten to death, whereas the youngest victims are more likely to be suffocated, violently shaken, or thrown (Smithey 1998). In the present study, the most common weapon used to kill children under the age of 1 year was hands or feet (66.2%). Half of these children were beaten to death (50.8%), 12.7 per cent were either strangled or suffocated or drowned, 6.3 per cent were violently shaken.⁶² A further 10 per cent of children under the age of 1 died as a result of criminal neglect. This includes failing to provide, for instance, proper care, medical treatment, and food to the infant.

For children over the age of 1, the most common weapon used by the offender was again their hands or feet (52.1%), with these children most commonly beaten to death (23.8%). The second most common cause of death was strangulation or suffocation (17.8%), followed by a stab wound (16.8%). Children are rarely killed with a firearm. Only 19 children (8.3%) under the age of 15 years were killed with a firearm.

In contrast, adult men and women are most likely to be killed with a knife or other sharp instrument (Mouzos 1999).

Motive

Unlike an argument between adult men and women that escalates to lethal violence, the motive is often unclear in child homicides. Phipps (1999, p. 538) observed that even when there is an apparent motive, the main reason for the killing “may be so trivial as to be nearly incomprehensible to most people”. The following case study illustrates this point well:

Case Study Twenty-Seven

The mother of a young infant had left her baby with her boyfriend to mind in a car while she went and prostituted herself to allegedly make money to support their drug habit. A number of hours had lapsed, and the mother returned to feed the baby. The mother purchased some take-away food and asked her boyfriend—the offender—to feed the baby while she went back to work. The offender began to feed the baby. He alleges that the baby bit him on his finger. In response, the offender punched the baby in the upper torso rendering the baby unconscious. By the time medical assistance was sought, the baby had died.

⁶² Also known as “Shaken Baby Syndrome”, where the severe shaking of an infant results in cerebral edema and hemorrhage (Alexander et al. 1990; Feldman and Brewer 1984; Smithey 1998.).

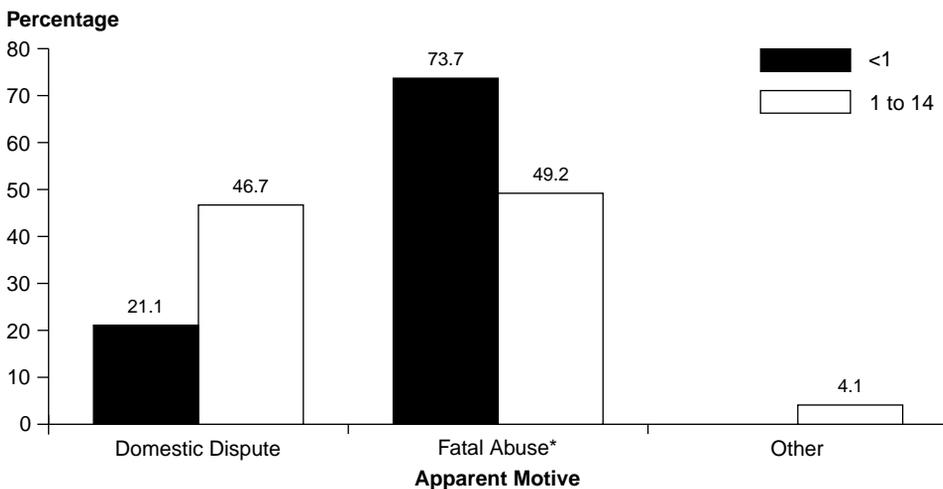
In addition, medical literature reports the most frequent reasons for killing a young child as being anger over an infant’s crying and over infants and toddlers soiling themselves. Brewster et al. (1998) found that 58 per cent of perpetrators who killed an infant 12 months old or younger reported an infant’s crying as preceding the abusive episode.

It is also difficult to determine whether the fatal act resulted from a one-time response from frustration and anger, or whether it was the result of hatred and genuine ill-will towards the child (Phipps 1999, p. 538).

In a study of child homicide, Strang (1996) reported that there were two common scenarios that emerged from the data: family disputes and fatal abuse. In the present study, if one were to exclude those cases where the motive was not recorded (n = 176, 57.5 %), then these two common scenarios would also emerge across a 10-year period.

Two out of 10 homicide victims under the age of 1 were killed as a result of a domestic dispute between family members (Figure 73). In one particular example, two parents were involved in a domestic argument in the kitchen area of their home. Their baby was on floor near the refrigerator. The husband became enraged as a result of the argument and pushed over the refrigerator that landed on the baby. The baby subsequently died as a result of injuries sustained.

Figure 73: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Child Homicide, Distribution of Victims according to Alleged Motive (n = 140)**



* This includes victims where there was no apparent motive.

** Excludes 176 victims where motive was not recorded.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Just under three-quarters of the homicide victims under the age of 1 were killed as a result of a fatal abuse (Figure 73). Wallace (1986) found that the most frequently appearing type consisted of children who died as a result of “non-accidental” injuries (36.6%). It is important to reiterate the point made by Phipps (1999), it is difficult to determine whether a killing was in response to anger or frustration, or whether it was a result of a culmination of incidents with the last incident being fatal. Later in this section, case study material will be presented showing a history of child abuse in some incidents.

There was also a small number of homicides of children under the age of 1 where the offender (almost exclusively the mother) killed the child shortly after giving birth (neonaticide—see case study 25 herein). The motivation for such a killing stems from a concealed pregnancy, which if it were to become known, could result in the rejection and ostracism by significant others, such as parents, husbands, or boyfriends (Arbolede-Florez 1976; Resnick 1970; Saunders 1989; Smithey 1998, p. 287).

For children aged between 1 and 14, there does not appear to be much difference in the motive for their deaths: 46.7 per cent were killed as a result of a family dispute and 49.2 per cent were killed as a result of a fatal incident, although the exact motive was not always apparent.

Two children over the age of 1 died as a result of the offenders performing “exorcisms”:

Case Study Twenty-Eight

A mother of a young child, assisted by 2 other offenders poured boiling water down the child's throat in order to exorcise the devil from the child's body. It was also alleged that the mother walked up and down the child's body and punched and kicked him. The mother allegedly said during the incident “Clean of the devil” (Wood 1999, p. 3). An ambulance was summoned to the residence, and they found the victim wrapped in white cotton cloth, and what appeared to be discolouration of the victim's upper torso and face consistent with scalding.

History of Child Abuse

Previous research suggests that in some cases of child homicide, there is a history of previous injuries sustained by the victim (De Silva and Oates 1993, Wilczynski 1997). In other words, there are usually several instances of child abuse inflicted on the child prior to the fatal incident. In a study of child homicide in England between 1989 and 1993, Wilczynski (1997) found that in over 50 per cent of the cases of child homicide (sample of 65), there had been

a prior history of violence by the offender towards the child. This was determined with some degree of certainty, such as a confession by the offender or conclusive pathological evidence.

The 1999 report by the New South Wales Child Death Review Team has indicated that 56 per cent of the children and young people who died from “non-accidental” injuries or in “undetermined or suspicious” circumstances in 1997/98 were known to the Department of Community Services (DoCS) before their deaths. For 8 young children who died, there was significant DoCS involvement.

The report also stated that “infants, children and young people who were previously known to DoCS were over-represented among child deaths from homicide, “non-accidental” injuries or in “undetermined/suspicious” circumstances: 12.3 per cent compared with 2.4 per cent of those children who had not had any prior contact” (p. 40).

As the NHMP has access to coronial files, it is possible to ascertain, in some cases of child homicide, whether the victim has had any previous injuries that subsequently healed. Such information obtained from post-mortem radiographs is usually documented in post-mortem reports. A number of child homicide cases recorded in the NHMP database showed evidence of prior physical abuse:

Case Study Twenty-Nine

Victim was 2 years of age and was in the care of a relative for a period of 3 months. Victim was allegedly left unattended in the shower where the victim suffered a fatal fall. It was the post-mortem that indicated the victim had previous and recent unmedicated injuries which consisted of a partly healed broken arm and a partly healed collarbone. There were also further healed markings which may be consistent with being struck with a belt. The pathologist indicated that these injuries were indications of neglect and that most of the scars, abrasions, and fractures on the victim are consistent with moderate to severe applications of force with a belt over a 3 to 4 month period.

Case Study Thirty

Victim was 1 year of age and had been brought into the hospital as the offender claimed to have been unable to wake the victim. The doctor who examined the victim became suspicious because the victim had bruising to the lower part of the trunk and injuries to the head, face and mouth. Post-mortem radiographs indicated that the victim had sustained fractures to the right leg, and that these fractures were a result of a severe angulational force, due to either a direct blow or to a “snapping” action

(like breaking a carrot). The other partly healed fractures are a result of indirect forces as the leg has been strongly gripped and twisted, or bent at the ankle and knee. Actions such as picking up the infant by the leg and “whipping” the victim’s body around may cause these injuries. Forces causing these injuries are severe and greatly in excess of those which would occur in normal handling of an infant. The constellation and timing of the injuries suggest that the victim had been the subject of an attack on at least two occasions.

Case Study Thirty-One

Victim was an infant of approximately 4 months of age. Police had previously received information of suspected child abuse, within the first month after birth, the victim was removed from the care of the parents. The victim was later returned to the parents. On the day of the incident, the victim was taken to hospital allegedly suffering from a seizure. Post-mortem radiographs revealed that the victim had a partially healed collarbone, the injury to which was approximately several weeks old, and bruising and bleeding in both eyes. Such injuries were suggestive of shaking of the baby with the head unsupported, and there was also evidence of previous episodes of shaking.

Who Kills Children?

As previously mentioned, 287 offenders were responsible for the deaths of 316 children. Of these offenders, 71.8 per cent were male and 27.2 per cent were female.⁶³ This ratio of 72 per cent male to 27 per cent female in these cases compares with the ratio of 87 per cent male to 13 per cent female for all homicide offenders. An even higher proportion of female offenders (32.2%) were responsible for the killing of children under the age of 1 (n = 19).

Perhaps the most obvious prediction from a Darwinian view of child homicide is that substitute parents (step-parents) will generally tend to devote less resources (for instance, time and nurturance) for children than will biological parents. This inevitably will result in children reared by people other than their biological parents and may, therefore, be exposed to a higher risk of neglect and abuse (Wilson and Daly 1988). “Step-parenthood presents itself, *a priori*, as a much more dangerous circumstance” (p. 85). Flinn (1988) reported that step-fathers interacted less with “their” children than did natural fathers. Interactions were more likely to be aggressive within step-relationships than within corresponding biological relationships.

It has also been suggested that mothers are more likely to abuse their children because they are considered to be the primary child carers therefore

⁶³ Gender was not recorded for three offenders (1.0%).

spending most “time at risk” with their children (Gelles and Cornell 1985, p. 55).

Following from this premise, Silverman and Kennedy (1993, p. 187) argue that the decline in homicide rates for children after the age of 5 years is related to the increase in time that these children spend away from the major source of violence against them. That is, their parents and in particular their mothers.

In accord with theoretical expectations, when children less than 15 years are killed in Australia, they are most likely to be killed by a family member (66.9%), primarily a parent (94.2%).

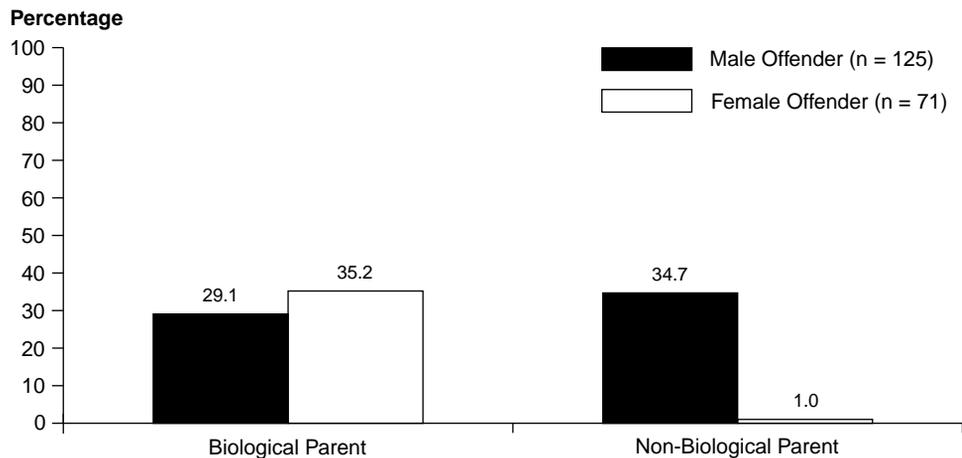
As one would expect given the high level of intimacy involved with child homicide, very few children died at the hands of a stranger (7.4% of child victims less than 15, 1.5% of child victims less than 1, and 9.0% of child victims aged 1–14 years). In the very few instances of stranger perpetrated child homicide, the offender was almost exclusively male.

Given that most child victims of homicide are killed primarily by a parent, we sought to determine whether biological or de-facto (non-biological, step-parents) parents were responsible for a greater proportion of child killings in Australia between 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1999. The study found that for children aged less than 15, biological parents were responsible for a greater proportion of killings (64.3%) than de-facto parents (35.7%) (Figure 74). When biological parents killed their children, it was usually the mother rather than the father who perpetrated the homicide.

About 4 out of 5 children aged less than 1 who were killed by a parent, were killed by their biological parent (father 55.8%, mother 44.2%). Although biological parents accounted for a majority of child homicides, when de-facto/non-biological parents killed, they were more likely to kill children aged 1 to 14 years (42.0%) than children aged less than 1 (18.9%) (Figure 75). In all but two of these cases, the offender was a male. This finding suggests that in many cases of child homicide, biological parents may be separated and the offender has been exposed to the stressors of raising non-biologically related children (Smithey 1998).

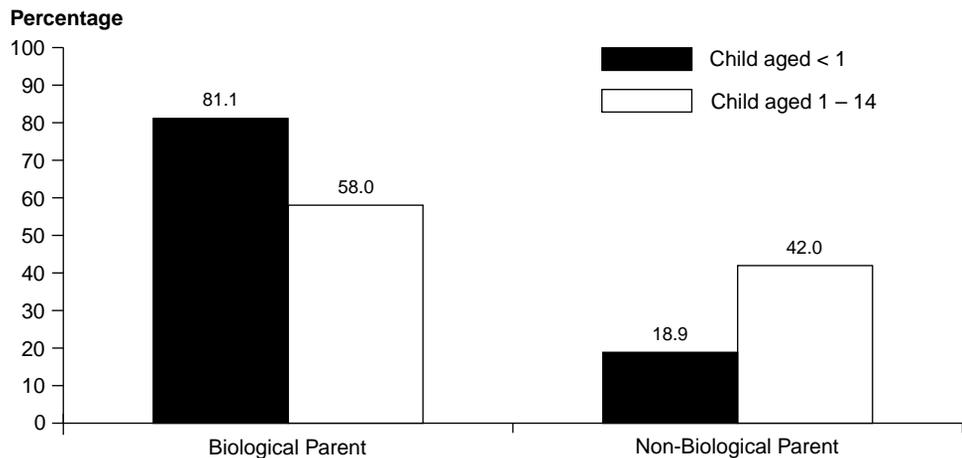
However, there is not an equal exposure of risk for children living with biological or non-biological parents. In comparison to data on family structure, intact couple families in Australia account for 77.1 per cent of couple families, whereas step or blended families account for only

Figure 74: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Parents who Killed their Children by Gender and Whether they are Biological/Non-biological Parents of the Victim (n = 196)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 75: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Parents who Killed their Children According to Whether they are Biological/Non-biological Parents of the Victim and the Age of the Child (n = 196)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

6.8 per cent of couple families (ABS 1997b). On the basis of these statistics, it would appear that children aged 1 to 14 years have a much higher risk of homicide victimisation by a non-biological parent than by a biological parent.

Murder-Suicide

Carcach and Grabosky (1998) found that an offender who kills his or her children is 9.7 times more likely to commit suicide than an offender who kills someone other than their own child. This study also found that of the 144 murder-suicide incidents recorded between 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1996, 14 per cent involved the killing of children only, and 6 per cent involved the killing of a partner/former partner and children (p. 3).

An analysis of child homicides where the offender committed suicide reveals that during the 10-years from 1989/90 to 1998/99, 24.7 per cent of offenders committed suicide. Three-quarters of the child homicide offenders who committed suicide were male. This study has found that it was usually biological fathers who killed their children and then committed suicide. Such incidents are usually precipitated by the breakdown of a marital relationship, whether it was a result of the desertion of the wife from the marriage (and the wife taking or leaving behind the children), or over finding out that custody has been awarded to one's former spouse, as occurred in the following case study:

Case Study Thirty-Two

The offender, after learning that his access to his 3 children who lived with him was to be restricted, took the 3 young children to a bush area and gave them sedatives. The offender then connected a hose to the exhaust on the vehicle and left himself and the 3 victims in the vehicle. All parties were found deceased as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning. "The mother of the children contacted police after discovering a goodbye note from her ex-husband containing a warning that the next time she saw the children it would be to identify them" (O'Brien, N. 1998, p. 3). Although motive was still unclear, it looked as though the offender was trying to prove ownership of the children (Reardon 1998).

Summary—The Killing of Children

Australian and international research has consistently found that children under the age of 1 are at a relatively high risk of homicide victimisation. During the 10-year period, approximately 9 per cent of all homicide victims were aged under 15. This proportion has remained quite stable since 1989. When children are killed in Australia, they are most likely to be killed in a residential location, with the use of physical force (hands or feet), and as a result of either a domestic dispute between family members, or fatal abuse. Consistent with previous research, biological parents, usually the mother, were responsible for a majority of child killings in Australia. Very rarely are children killed by a stranger.

Homicidal Children

Homicide committed by a child⁶⁴ is most disturbing. Although a relative low proportion of homicide offenders are children (about 5% in Australia), the fact that they are “just” children is a major concern, especially when anecdotal experience suggests “that children in the final stages of the twentieth century are better educated and more sophisticated than their counterparts 200 years ago” (Scarlet, cited in Doherty 2000, p. 3). In other words, the children of today should be more likely to distinguish between right and wrong than their earlier counterparts (Criminal Law Review Division 2000).

Age of Criminal Responsibility

In Australia, the age of criminal responsibility has been raised by statute to 10 in all Australian jurisdictions, except the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania where the threshold is 8 and 7 respectively (Table 9).

There are also jurisdictional differences in Australia regarding the definition of juvenile. For example, in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory a juvenile is defined as any person under the age of 18. Whereas in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory a juvenile is defined as any person under the age of 17 (Table 9). Although a majority of juveniles who commit an offence will be treated by the Children’s Court (Juvenile Court in the Northern Territory) in

Table 9: AUSTRALIA, STATES and TERRITORIES: Age of Criminal Responsibility and Definition of Juvenile

State/Territory	Age of Criminal Responsibility	Maximum Age to be considered as a Juvenile
New South Wales	10	Under 18
Victoria	10	Under 17
Queensland	10	Under 17
South Australia	10	Under 18
Western Australia	10	Under 18
Tasmania	*7	*Under 17
Northern Territory	10	Under 17
Australian Capital Territory	8	Under 18

* Two new acts have been enacted by the Tasmanian Parliament in 1998: Youth Justice Act and the Child, Young People and Their Families Act. The Youth Justice Act extends the age of a juvenile to under 18 and the age of criminal responsibility to 10. Both Acts are expected to be implemented by 1 July 2000.

Source: derived from Mukherjee et al. (1997).

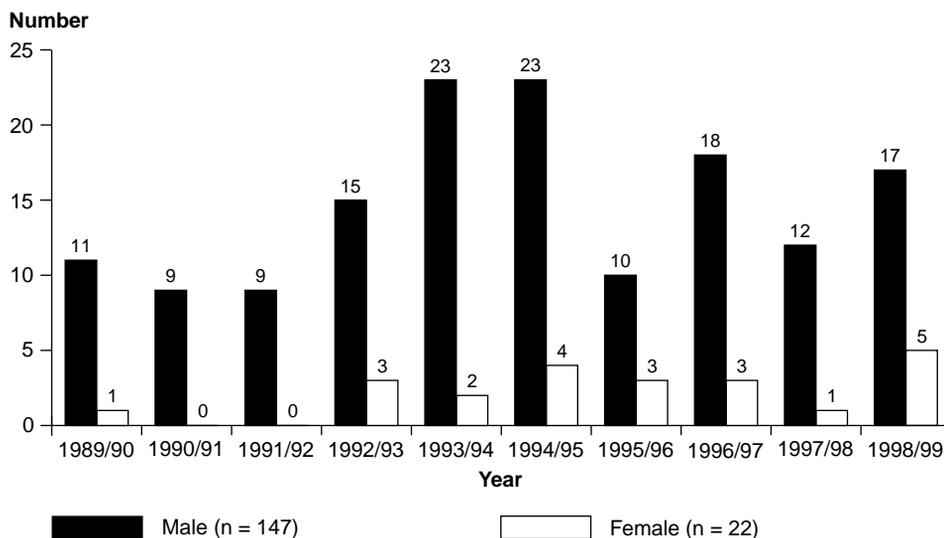
⁶⁴ For the purposes of this section the terms “child” and “juvenile” will be used interchangeably.

Figure 76: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number of Child Offenders and the Number of Victims that they Killed



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 77: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Yearly Distribution of Child Homicide Offenders According to Gender (n = 169)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

each respective jurisdiction, juveniles who are charged with serious offences such as murder, rape, and armed robbery will most likely be tried in a higher court⁶⁵ (Mukherjee et al. 1997).

In the following section on children who kill, analyses will focus solely on children aged between 10 and 16 who have been charged with homicide in Australia.⁶⁶

Trends in Children Who Kill

In Australia, between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, 126 homicide incidents were perpetrated by offenders aged between 10 and 16. During this period, 169 child offenders were responsible for the death of 130 victims (Figure 76). Young age is a primary factor associated with violence and youth homicide usually involves more offenders than victims (Carcach 1997). Note that the number of child offenders during some years exceeds the number of victims they killed. Similarly, in just over half of these incidents perpetrated by children (53.6%), the child offender was not acting alone. In other words, when children kill, they are most likely to do so in groups of 2 or more.

Gender of Child Homicide Offenders

In terms of gender, there does not appear to be any differences in the proportion of male and female child offenders in comparison to all homicide offenders. In accord with theoretical expectations, a majority of child offenders over the 10-year period were male (87%). In addition, it appears that the frequency of child offending over the years has fluctuated from as low as 9 offenders in 1990/91 and 1991/92 to as high as 27 child offenders in 1994/95 (Figure 77). These fluctuations can be attributed to the relative small number of children who commit homicide (an average of 17 child homicide offenders per year). In contrast, there has been a documented rise in child homicide offending in some other countries such as in Canada and in the United States.

⁶⁵ In Victoria, a juvenile who commits homicide will only be tried in the Supreme Court. In other serious offences, the defence and the prosecutor can apply for it to be heard in a higher court. Similarly, in all jurisdictions except for in New South Wales, a juvenile or their parent can request a jury trial (Mukherjee et al. 1997, p. 7).

⁶⁶ In comparison to the previous chapter, it was decided to extend the age cut-off to include 16 year old olds due to the maximum age required to be considered a juvenile by some of the most populous states and territories in Australia. Also, according to A Dictionary of Criminology (Walsh and Poole 1983) "juvenile is defined as one who has attained the age of ten years and is under 17" (p. 122).

Child Offenders: International Comparison

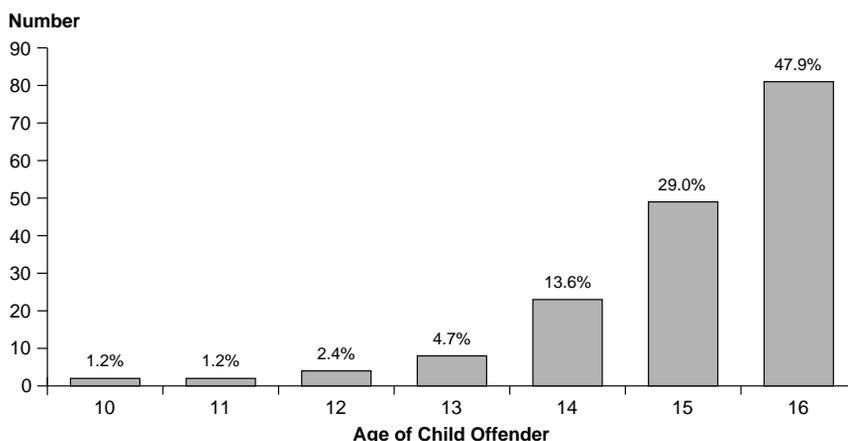
The youngest homicide offender charged in Australia was aged 10 (Figure 78). Just under half of the child homicide offenders were aged 16 (47.9%). An international comparison revealed that in the United States in 1998, 616 children aged under 17 were charged with murder (3.8% of the total number of offenders charged with murder) (United States Department of Justice 1999). In 1997, children⁶⁷ accounted for a much higher proportion of homicide offenders in Canada (11% of all persons accused of homicide) (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 1998).

There were also a number of unusual international cases that received considerable media coverage, mainly because of the offender’s young age and the level of brutality. A brief outline of these selected cases (from Heide 1999) follows:

United States (Jonesboro, Arkansas)—Two boys aged 11 and 13 reportedly stole guns and ammunition, went to their school, and pulled a fire alarm. As their schoolmates and staff evacuated the building, the boys opened fire, killing 4 girls and 1 female teacher, and wounding 10 more (p. 18).

Canada—A 15-year-old boy was charged with killing his mother, step-father and 2 younger sisters. He reportedly fired 10 shots into their

Figure 78: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Number and Percentage of Child Homicide Offenders According to Age (n = 169)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

⁶⁷ Refers to youths aged 12 to 17 years.

heads, cut off his mother’s breasts, and removed clothing to expose her genitals after the massacre. He then allegedly dragged the 4 bodies into the bush, took his parents’ money, and practiced forging his mother’s name. He was apprehended whilst driving the family van after a high speed chase by police a few days later (pp. 23–24).

India—A 5-year-old reportedly bludgeoned 3 children to death, but escaped charges because children under the age of 6 cannot be held criminally responsible (p. 5).

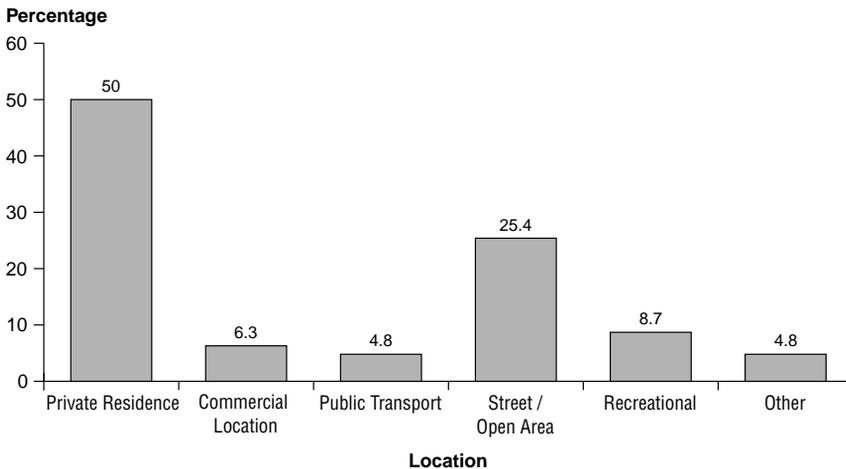
France—Three children aged between 8 and 10 physically assaulted a homeless man to death after he tried to stay in their playhouse. Although they were not charged with murder, they were charged and convicted of inflicting injury without intention to kill (p. 5).

England—Two 10-year-old boys kidnapped a 2-year-old boy from a shopping mall in Liverpool. Together, they allegedly clubbed the small child to death with bricks and an iron bar. Thereafter, they placed the child’s body on railroad tracks to be cut in half by a speeding train (p. 5).

Incident Details

A majority of all Australian homicide incidents occur in residential premises. This is also the case for homicide incidents committed by children (Figure 79).

Figure 79: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Distribution of Incidents Committed by Child Homicide Offenders According to Location (n = 126)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

A much higher proportion of incidents committed by child offenders occurred in the course of other crime (39.2%), in comparison to all homicide incidents that occurred during the commission of another crime (13%). This finding is consistent with that of Goetting (1993, p. 164) who also found that a sizable proportion (21.7%) of child homicide incidents were associated with the commission of another crime.

Case Study Thirty-Three

Late one afternoon after shopping, the victim was returning to her vehicle when she was allegedly approached by 2 16 year-old youths from behind. One of the youths allegedly opened the victim's car door and grabbed the victim's handbag and attempted to pull it from her shoulder. The victim resisted and was dragged to the centre of the roadway. One of the offenders then punched the victim and they both ran off with the victim's handbag. The victim was taken to the hospital in a critical condition, but died shortly thereafter.

Case Study Thirty-Four

During the evening of the incident, the 15-year-old offender was walking around the area of the incident with the intention of breaking into unoccupied houses to look for money. The young offender gained entry into the victim's house. Whilst the offender was in the victim's house, the victim and her child returned home after an evening out. The victim put her child to bed and decided to take a shower before retiring to bed. The victim then became aware that someone other than her child was in the house. At this stage the young offender allegedly hid behind the bedroom door. When the victim entered the bedroom, the offender allegedly stepped out from behind the door and stabbed the victim in the neck with a knife that the offender had allegedly obtained from the kitchen. The offender then fled. The victim ran from the house and collapsed in her neighbour's driveway and died. The young offender was allegedly on bail in another state for numerous property offences and violent assaults.

Victim Details

Just over three-quarters of the victims killed by children were male (76.3%). As expected, when children kill, they are mostly likely to kill a person who is older than them (median age group of victims: 35–49 years). In only 6.9 per cent of cases, the offender killed a victim who was younger than them.

Similar to other offenders, child homicide offenders most commonly used a knife or other sharp instrument to commit the homicide (34.9%). Just over a quarter of the victims were killed with the use of physical force (hands or feet) (27.0%) and 19.8 per cent of victims of child offenders were killed with a firearm.

Why do Children Kill?

In the case of child homicide, probably one of the questions in everyone's mind would be "why"? What motivated these children to commit the most extreme crime possible? Research on children who kill has focussed on a variety of possible explanations.

These include:

- Psychogenic explanations—mental illness, defective intelligence, and childhood trauma.
- Biopsychological explanations—neurological impairments and brain injury.
- Sociological explanations—family constellation, gang involvement, drug and alcohol use, participation in other antisocial behaviour, and peer associations (Heide 1999, p. 29).

The few studies that have addressed the psychopathology of juvenile murderers and how they differ from aggressive children who have not killed, have found that children who committed homicide had suffered more extensive child abuse, had witnessed more family and environmental violence, had greater parental psychopathology, and had more neurological abnormalities than their less aggressive peers (Benedek and Cornell 1989; Myers et al. 1995; Myers and Scott 1998).

It is important to explain why one individual engages in lethal behaviour while another individual with similar life experiences, family/environmental backgrounds does not. To criminologists, this is the million dollar question. If we knew what actually leads one person when confronted with a situation conducive to homicide to actually "take the plunge" so to speak, and commit homicide, we would be able to identify possible preventative strategies to minimise the possibility of a lethal outcome. However, we are faced with that long-term dilemma associated with human nature; that is, unpredictability.

How do we predict the unpredictable?

For homicidal children, research suggests that some genetic factors and biological vulnerabilities may predispose certain individuals to respond violently (Heide 1999):

Individually, each of the vulnerabilities characteristic of juvenile murderers may be present, to a greater or lesser extent, in nonviolent delinquents and even in nondelinquents. It is, rather, the combination of serious intrinsic vulnerabilities in the combination of an abusive or violent environment that is associated with the development of aggression. The impulsivity, emotional liability, and cognitive impairment are often associated with neurological dysfunction diminish the ability to control behaviour. A paranoid orientation and a tendency to misperceive reality further lowers a child's threshold for controlling aggression. Abuse and family violence, in turn, provide stimulating models for aggressive behaviours and also engender rage in these already oversuspicious, impulsive individuals (Lewis et al. 1988, 1989, cited in Heide 1999, p. 51).

According to the NHMP data, where the motive of the offender was known (n = 111), the main reason behind children engaging in violent behaviour was the acquisition of "money / drugs or property" (34.2%). These were instrumental homicides. Although the number of children who were motivated by the need to obtain money or drugs is relatively small (n = 38), nonetheless, this sends a disturbing message to society—that some of today's children are killing in order to obtain money or drugs (implications of this finding will be discussed in the following chapter).

Case Study Thirty-Five

Two youths (16 and 18 years old) approached the victim and an argument over money and drugs ensued. The victim allegedly produced a knife and lunged at one of the offenders. The other offender allegedly grabbed the knife from the victim and stabbed the victim to the upper left chest area causing a large wound. The victim then removed the knife from his chest, fell to the footpath and died almost immediately from massive blood loss.

Just under a quarter of the victims killed by child offenders were killed as a result of an argument (non-domestic)(23.4%). A further 12.6 per cent of the child homicide offenders killed as a result of a domestic altercation and 10.8 per cent killed in order to seek revenge for some alleged wrongdoing on behalf of the victim (for example, when an abused child kills his/her abusive parents). However, in just under 1 in 10 homicides, the child offender killed

for no apparent reason (n = 10 or 9.0%). These killings are usually referred to as “thrill” killings (see Ewing 1990).

Case Study Thirty-Six

The 2 offenders (aged 14 and 18 years) were of no fixed address and they stayed in one particular park on a number of occasions. On the morning of the incident, the 2 offenders conversed with the victim and another person at this location. It is alleged that an argument erupted. The older offender poured methylated spirits over the victim and the younger offender allegedly set fire to the victim.

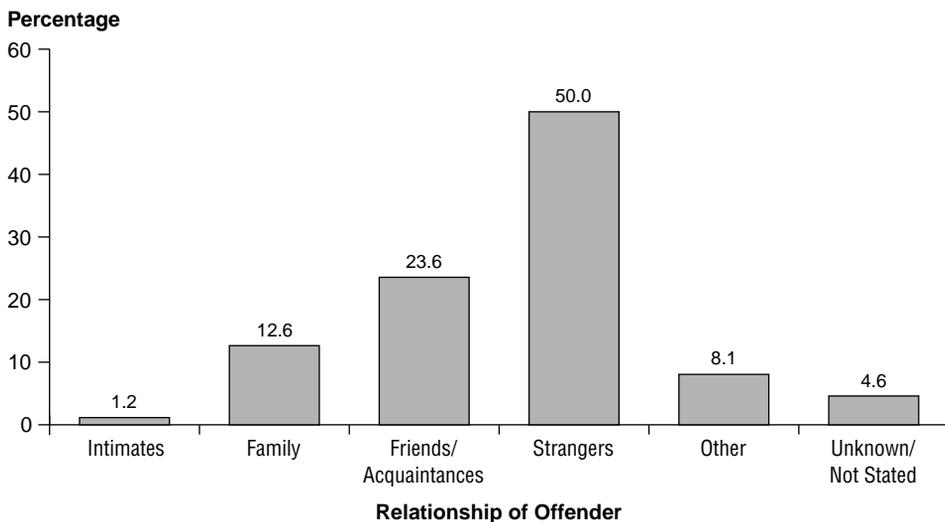
Case Study Thirty-Seven

A 12-year old girl allegedly shot her mother whilst she lay on her bed, in response to her mother’s screams that there was a prowler in the house. It was alleged that the mother was a drug-addicted psychotic, prone to hallucinations and paranoia, and that there were a number of episodes where the victim had allegedly imagined that there were prowlers out to get her (The Canberra Times, 9 June 1999, p. 4).

Victim–Offender Relationships—Who do Children Kill?

When children kill in Australia, they are almost as likely to kill a stranger (50.0%) as a person known to them (45.4%) (Figure 80). This is a much higher proportion than that (28.8%) reported in a Detroit study (Goetting 1993). Just under one-quarter of homicides involving child offenders occurred between friends or acquaintances (23.6%). Only

Figure 80: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Child Homicide Offenders: Victim–Offender Relationships (n = 174)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

2 homicides occurred between intimate partners, and this involved the young offender killing a current or former girlfriend.

Summary—Homicidal Children

It appears from this 10-year analysis of children who kill while children are generally subject to homicidal patterns characteristic of their older counterparts, they perhaps deviate somewhat from those norms along certain dimensions. Killings by children are more commonly committed in groups of 2 or more and are more likely to occur in the commission of another crime, usually a robbery “gone wrong”. Children are also more likely to kill someone older than them. On the rare occasions when children kill in Australia, they are most likely to be motivated to kill for money or drugs, and they are most likely to target a stranger.

Elderly Homicide

Of all the causes which influence the development of propensity to crime and victimisation, or which diminish that propensity, age is unquestionably the most energetic (Quetelet 1839, cited in Fattah and Sacco 1989, p.12).

Age has been identified as the most important criminological variable, and many who have studied the effect of age on criminality and victimisation have found that there is a linear negative relationship between age and victimisation (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1983; Fattah and Sacco 1989; Wolfgang 1958).

Perhaps because it is so unusual, it seems that few issues generate the intensity of community indignation as the news that an elderly person (or a child) has been the victim of a criminal attack (Graycar and James 1999).

The aim of this section is to examine the circumstances and the characteristics of homicides committed against elderly persons in Australia, and whether homicides involving older persons possess qualitatively different characteristics from homicides occurring in the rest of the population. For the purposes of this study, elderly will be defined as persons aged 65 years and older. The selection of age 65 as the demarcation between middle and old age is an arbitrary one. Ageing is a process and there is no agreed cut-off age between these two stages in life. Consistent with other researchers, the choice of this age has been made for social purposes as a means for determining the point of retirement or the point of eligibility for various services available to older persons (Butler and Lewis 1982; cited in Fattah and Sacco 1989, p. 2).

It is also important to note that some gerontologists have criticised chronological age as the criterion for distinguishing between the elderly and other age groups. The basis for their criticisms is that there may be differences between the person's chronological age and their "functional age", that is, the age in which they are still able to perform a job. Similarly, some people may "feel" and "look" younger than they actually are.

Hahn (1976, cited in Fattah and Sacco 1989, p. 3) offers a distinction between strict chronological age and three others:

- Personal age: how old a person seems to themselves.

- Interpersonal age: how old the same person seems to others who know them.
- Consensual age: the degree of agreement between personal and the interpersonal age.

Fattah and Sacco (1989) point out that age is one criterion that criminals supposedly take into account when selecting potential victims. If this is so, then it would be the chronological age that is important. Unless the chronological age of the prospective victim is known to the offender (as would be the case where the victim and the offender are known to each other), the assessment of the victim's vulnerability will be made on the basis of how old the potential victim appears to the offender.

With the onset of old age, there are certain identifiable physiological and social changes (physical limitations, role transitions) that each person will experience (George 1996; Nelsen and Huff-Corzine 1998). Generally, these include an overall decline in one's physical condition (organ deterioration, reductions in sensory perception and physical coordination, as well as slowed motor and mental response) and a greater prevalence of chronic diseases and disabling conditions (cardiovascular diseases, arthritis, and diabetes) (Nelsen and Huff-Corzine 1998; Arber and Evandrou 1993).

In 1998, just over half of all Australians aged 65 years and over had some form of disability, restricting their ability to conduct basic daily tasks. The incidence of profound disability, however, is significantly higher in the 80 and over age groups with 27 per cent of males and 40 per cent of females being affected (ABS 1999a). "Taken together, these factors have implications for the elderly's risk of personal victimization" (Nelsen and Huff-Corzine 1998, p. 133).

Trends in the Victimization of the Elderly

In Australia, between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, there were 189 homicide incidents that resulted in the death of 236 elderly victims. On average, 24 elderly persons are killed each year in Australia.

Previous Australian research by Carcach et al. (1998) revealed that the age-specific rate of victimisation for elderly persons "experienced a slight rise in 1994/95 followed by another rise in 1995/96" (p. 2). An examination of the elderly victims of homicide as a proportion of all homicides, across a 10-year period, indicates that there is a slight increasing trend. That is, the trend

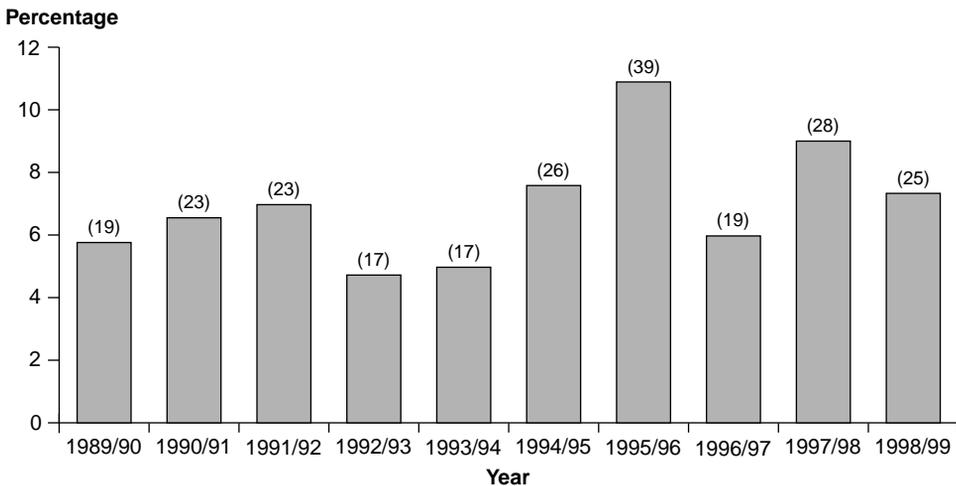
observed by Carcach et al. (1998) has continued also for the three additional years examined in this study (1996/97, 1997/98, 1998/99) (see Figure 81).

On average, across the 10-year period elderly victims of homicide represented approximately 7 per cent of all victims of homicide. As illustrated in Figure 81, the proportion of victims of homicide that are elderly seems to have increased slightly since the inception of the NHMP back in 1989.

Although the proportion of victims of homicide who are elderly may be on the increase, in comparison to other victims of homicide, the elderly experience one of the lowest rates of victimisation. Between 1989/90 and 1998/99, persons aged 65 years and over were victimised at a rate of 1.15 per 100,000 relevant population (see Figure 21, Table 3). This finding confirms previous research that older people are at the lowest risk of homicide mortality generally (Fox and Levin 1991).

As previously stated (see “Victim Characteristics” in this publication), it was found that generally about 40 per cent of homicide victims were female and about 60 per cent were male. In contrast, when the gender of elderly victims of homicide was examined, a different picture emerges. It appears that elderly victims of homicide were evenly distributed according to gender (49.6% male; 50.4% female). In other words, male and female elderly persons

Figure 81: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Proportion of Homicide Victims that Were Aged 65 Years and Over (n = 236)



Number of homicide victims aged 65 years and over per year, shown in brackets.

Source: NHMP, AIC.

are equally at risk of homicide victimisation. There is no gender differentiation when the victims of homicide are aged 65 years and over.

Although there may be no gender-based differences in the distribution of victims aged 65 years and over (as one group), if the victims aged 65 and over were divided into separate age categories (for example, 65–69 and 70–74) then gender differences do emerge. For example, it seems that from the age of 70, a higher proportion of elderly females were victimised (Table 10). However, the fact that women increasingly outnumber men in Australia’s ageing population, with projections indicating that even as early as 2001 more than 70 per cent of people over the age of 85 will be women (ABS 1996), may account for these gender differences. During the 10-year period, approximately 43.2 per cent of Australia’s population aged 65 and over were male and 56.8 per cent were female.

However, in terms of victimisation rates per 100,000 relevant population, elderly males are victimised at a rate of 1.32, whereas elderly females are victimised at a rate of 1.02. It seems that elderly males have a slightly higher risk of homicide victimisation than elderly females.

Table 10: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Gender-Age Distribution of Elderly Victims of Homicide (n = 236)

Gender of Victim	Age Group of Older Victims					Total
	65–69	70–74	75–79	80–84	85+	
	<i>Number</i>					
Male	59	22	17	11	8	117
Female	31	31	20	22	15	119
Persons	90	53	37	33	23	236
	<i>Percentage</i>					
Male	65.6	41.5	45.9	33.3	34.8	49.6
Female	34.4	58.5	54.1	66.7	65.2	50.4
Persons	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NHMP, AIC.

Circumstances and Characteristics of Elderly Homicide

Compared to their younger counterparts, elderly persons face a lower risk of homicide victimisation. Some researchers suggest that this is mainly a function of the differing lifestyles between these age cohorts. Clarke (1990), for example, argues that the relative low risk of crime victimisation of older persons appears to be influenced to some extent by the persons with whom they choose to associate and the routine activities in which they engage. It is

also argued that the lifestyle of the elderly leads to isolation thus contributing to a lower rate of victimisation (Solicitor General of Canada 1985, cited in Kennedy and Silverman 1990).

Following from this research, Messner and Tardiff (1985) and Cohen and Felson (1979) posit that because older persons routinely spend more time in private residences and interact primarily with “family” members, they are more likely than other persons to be killed by family members in or near their homes.

On the other hand, when elderly persons leave the safety of their homes, their vulnerability for stranger perpetrated predatory violence is increased. Maxfield (1989) examined Supplementary Homicide Reports from selected metropolitan areas in the United States. He concluded that the elderly are disproportionately victims of murder in connection with an instrumental felony (including theft-based murders). These findings were consistent with both Silverman and Kennedy (1987), Kennedy and Silverman (1990) and Copeland (1986).

Although the elderly are victimised less frequently than any other age group, many studies have reported that the elderly experience a higher fear of crime (Hough and Mayhew 1983).

Location of Elderly Homicide

In accord with the routine activities of elderly persons, during the 10-year period under review, just over 8 out of 10 homicide incidents (82.5%) involving elderly victims occurred in a private residence. Approximately 5 per cent occurred in a street or open area. This follows other research which found that a relative low proportion of the elderly are victimised in a public location (Bell and Panaia 1999).

Weapon Used to Kill Elderly Victims

As we would expect, elderly persons similar to infants would also exhibit greater vulnerability to physical violence; that is, a decreased chance of recovery if injured, than persons in younger age groups (Kennedy and Silverman 1990). As mentioned in the second chapter “Homicide in Australia: A Brief Overview”, it was found that in Australia between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999, the most common weapon used to commit homicide was a knife or some other sharp instrument (see Figures 31 and 32). In comparison, when elderly persons are killed, they are most likely to be killed with the use of physical violence (hands, feet) (35.6%). A knife or sharp

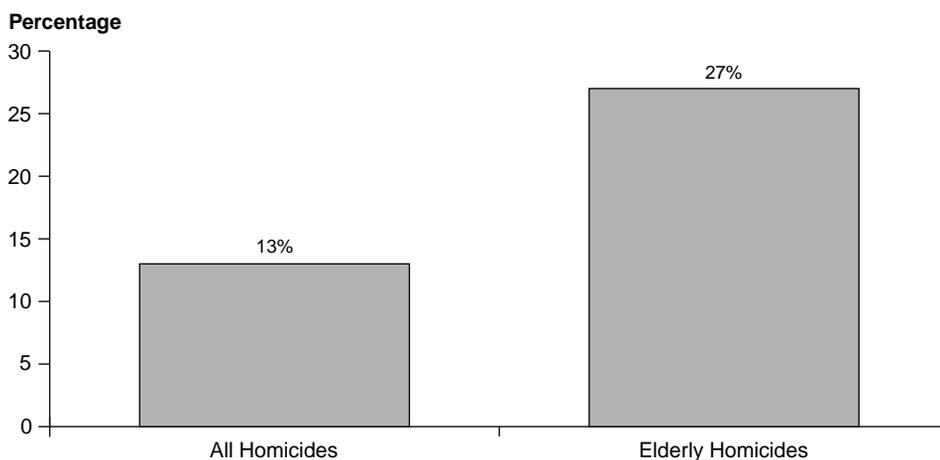
instrument is the second most common weapon employed in the commission of elderly homicide (26.1%).

Elderly Homicide in the Course of Other Crime

As previously stated, recent research indicates that elderly persons are disproportionately represented as victims of homicides occurring in association with other crimes (Fox and Levin 1991). Overall, approximately 13 per cent of all homicide incidents in Australia occurred in the course of other crime (most likely a robbery). In contrast, 27 per cent of homicide incidents involving elderly victims occurred in the course of other crime (Figure 82). In other words, the likelihood of a homicide occurring during the commission of another crime was double for elderly persons than for younger persons.

These findings suggest that due to their increased vulnerability as a function of age, that is, a decline in physical strength and agility, prospect for recovery post-injury, chances of survival after an attack, elderly persons may be viewed by some offenders as so-called “soft targets” or “easy marks”. As a result, the elderly would be far more likely to be fatally wounded when robbed (Fox and Levin 1998). In a number of recorded incidents, a push from behind was sufficient enough to cause the death of some elderly persons (whether immediately or as a result of subsequent health complications).

Figure 82: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Proportion of All Homicide Incidents and Elderly Homicide Incidents Occurring in the Course of Other Crime



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Of the 50 homicide incidents involving elderly victims that occurred in the course of other crime, 82 per cent occurred in a private residence (n = 41). Only 8 per cent (n = 4) occurred in a street or open area. This finding focuses on the routine activity of the victim or as Kennedy and Silverman (1990, p. 316) state, the “inactivity” of the victim. The social isolation faced by some elderly persons sometimes results in liability. According to Kennedy and Silverman (1990, p. 316) “the activity of the burglar coupled with the inactivity and vulnerability of the elderly renders crime possible and, for some perhaps irresistibly attractive”.

To some offenders, the elderly are viewed as suitable targets. The notion of target suitability refers to the offender’s perception of a target in terms of value (monetary, symbolic), visibility, access and inertia (that is, the likelihood that the target may be overcome) (Felson and Cohen 1980, cited in Nelsen and Huff-Corzine 1998, p. 133).

Grayson and Stein (1981) conducted an innovative study whereby they videotaped persons selected at random walking through one of the highest assault areas of New York City. They subsequently held a viewing of the videotape for offenders who had been incarcerated for assault. They asked these offenders to rate the persons on the videotape in terms of their vulnerability of becoming a victim. The findings of this study revealed that older persons were more likely to be rated as potential victims and that several physical characteristics such as stride length, body movement, and type of walk were interpreted as indications of vulnerability.

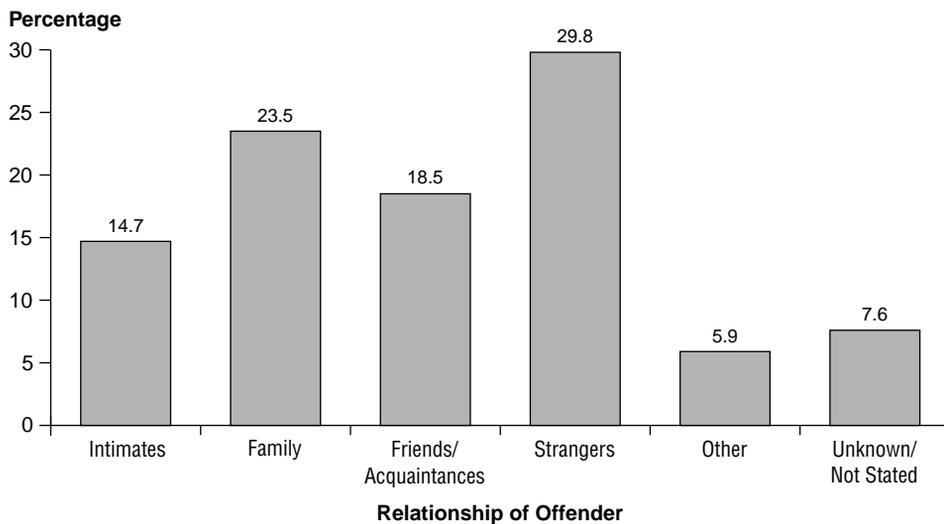
So far, the results are consistent with other international findings on the main characteristics of elderly homicide. The next step is to examine the victim–offender relationship. That is, who are most likely to kill elderly persons? Are older persons more at risk of homicide victimisation from family members or strangers?

The Offender of Elderly Homicide

Research suggests that older people are at risk from four main sources:

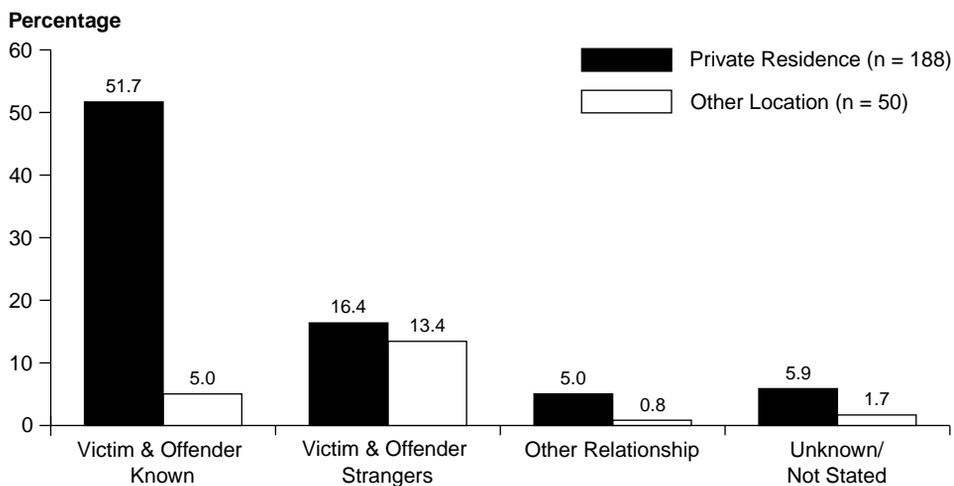
- Family members, friends, and acquaintances who may assault or steal from them.
- Strangers who may victimise them.
- Commercial organisations or “white collar” criminals who could defraud them.

Figure 83: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Elderly Victim–Offender Relationship (n = 238)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

Figure 84: AUSTRALIA, 1 July 1989–30 June 1999: Elderly Victim–Offender Relationship According to Location (n = 238)



Source: NHMP, AIC.

- Carers with whom they are in a “duty of care” relationship and who may neglect or abuse them (Graycar and James 1999).

Given that elderly persons spend more time at home, there would also be greater interaction between elderly persons and family members. As a result, routine activities predict that homicide of the elderly will most often occur at the hands of family members or friends, and least often by strangers. Similarly, routine activities suggests that homicide of the elderly will most often occur in their homes by family members or friends (Kennedy and Silverman 1990, p. 310).

An analysis of the victim–offender relationship reveals that in accord with the routine activities prediction, elderly persons in Australia are also more likely to be victimised by someone known to them (56.7%) (Figure 83). Just over a quarter of the elderly victims of homicide died at the hands of a stranger (29.8%).

As predicted, elderly persons are most likely to be killed in a private residence by someone known to them (most likely a family member) (Figure 84). Research suggests that when older people require support and assistance from families or professional service providers because of frailty and dependence, some abusive situations may arise (Graycar and James 1999). In one Australian study, it was estimated that 4.6 per cent of older people are victims of physical, sexual, or financial abuse perpetrated mostly by family members and those who are in a duty of care position with the victim (Kurrle et al. 1992). This finding is consistent with estimates in comparable countries (Graycar and James 1999). Such behaviour is often referred to as elder abuse and it occurs both in private settings and in a residential care environment.

Consistent with the findings of Kennedy and Silverman (1990), the present study has also found that when an elderly person is killed by a stranger they are also slightly more likely to be killed in a private residence than some other location (16.4% vs. 13.4%). In other words, the home appears to be as dangerous as a public place with regard to victimisation by a stranger.

These results indicate that the lifestyle of elderly persons who live alone at home may make some persons particularly vulnerable, sometimes resulting in them being considered as easy targets by both persons known to them, such as family members and friends, and unknown persons.

Alleged Motive of the Offender

A further analysis based on the offender's alleged motive for the killing (where motive was known, n = 134) indicates that most of the elderly homicides arose from domestic discord and from petty arguments between friends and acquaintances (29.9%), or from alcohol-related arguments (6.0%). It is not surprising that due to the high incidence of elderly homicide occurring in association with other crime, 23.8 per cent of elderly homicide resulted from the process in which the offender's main goal was to acquire money or drugs.

Scenarios of Elderly Homicide⁶⁸

Case Study Thirty-Eight

The offender drove an elderly relative to his parent's residence after picking her up from her home. At this location, the offender then allegedly shot the victim once in the back and then a number of times in the head. The offender then allegedly placed the elderly victim's body into a wheelbarrow and took the body onto another property and buried the body in a shallow grave. The offender then drove to the victim's residence and allegedly took the victim's vehicle and drove interstate where he was apprehended.

Case Study Thirty-Nine

The elderly victim was lying in bed when her son shot her in the head, and then subsequently committed suicide. The offender was allegedly experiencing "personal problems" (The Advertiser, 4 July 1998, p. 15).

Case Study Forty

The elderly grandmother of the offender was sleeping on the top floor of the premises. The offender and a friend had allegedly smoked a quantity of cannabis prior to falling asleep on the bottom level of the premises. The offender allegedly awoke and threatened to assault his friend. The offender's friend then fled the premises. Within the next couple of minutes, the offender allegedly went to his vehicle and removed an axe. The offender then allegedly walked to his elderly grandmother's bedroom and struck his grandmother with the axe. After doing this, the offender allegedly went to a neighbour's house and requested help saying that his grandmother was possessed by satan. The offender then allegedly pulled the neighbour to the vehicle where he again allegedly produced an axe and raised it above his head directing it at the neighbour. The neighbour ran back into their house and contacted police.

⁶⁸ See also Case Study Numbers One, Two, and Seven, which also involved elderly victims.

Case Study Forty-One

The offender and his elderly father were involved in a heated argument. The offender allegedly became enraged and began striking his father with a blunt instrument. The offender then allegedly put the victim to bed and left the premises. The offender then contacted a friend and relayed the incident to them. The friend of the offender contacted police, who attended the premises and found a male person lying in the bed. The person had sustained head injuries and the bedding was covered with blood. The offender attended the local police station with his lawyer and was charged with one count of murder.

Summary—Elderly Victims of Homicide

The homicide of an elderly person is a relatively rare occurrence, with elderly victims accounting for approximately 7 per cent of all homicide victims across a 10-year period. Elderly persons were over-represented in homicide incidents occurring in the course of other crime, such as robbery, and they were also far more likely to be victimised in their own homes by both persons known and unknown to them. Due to the relative low incidence of elderly homicide (an average of 24 elderly homicide victims per year) in Australia, definitive generalisations cannot be made. Reiteration of the low risk of homicide victimisation faced by elderly Australians is crucial in helping allay any unwarranted anxieties (Carcach et al. 1998).

Concluding Discussion: Preventing Homicidal Encounters—Directions for the New Millennium

Aggression is a deeply ingrained and enduring part of the human behavioural repertoire. Over the past century, research has shown that for an extreme crime such as homicide, victimisation rates have demonstrated remarkable stability in some countries, with decreasing trends experienced recently in countries such as the United States. Lethal violence in Australia and the rest of the world will very likely not abate sometime soon.

Given that the rate of homicide victimisation has remained relatively stable over the years, especially during the period covered by this report, this inevitably leads one to question whether homicide can be prevented here in Australia, and elsewhere for that matter. Although, ultimately this would be the aim of most preventative strategies, it may not be feasible to concentrate solely on reducing absolute numbers of homicides, but rather to consider homicide in the context of a much larger problem of assaultive violence when examining possible intervention and prevention strategies (Mercey and Hammond 1999).

It is widely acknowledged that homicide is not one type of crime, but that it consists of a variety of subsets dependent upon the circumstances of the event and the interaction between the victim and the offender. Throughout this report, and especially in the previous chapter, several subsets of homicide were examined and it was noted that each type of homicide differed in important ways. Although not exhaustive in coverage of the diverse forms of homicide, the report mainly focussed on the dynamics of the interactions that occurred when the following groups of victims were involved: intimate partners, children (especially the very young), and the elderly. It was also identified that for some homicides involving intimate partners and children, the lethal act needs to be viewed as part of a much larger problem where the incident was often preceded by numerous episodes of violence. In these cases, the homicide was the end result in a series of violent episodes that just went too far.

In addition, the report also examined the dynamics of homicides perpetrated by men against other men, women, or children, and identified the unique circumstances of such acts.

Understanding that there are differences between various themes of homicide enables one to specifically examine the corresponding preventative measures that not only target the risk factors associated with homicide victimisation and offending, but also the specific types of violence and behaviours associated with an increased risk.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to bring together the principal findings of this report and to combine them with corresponding preventative measures. This chapter intends to go beyond simply discussing preventative approaches for homicide in general. As homicide is multi-faceted, a combination of approaches is required to specifically address some of the different types of homicidal encounters in Australia as outlined in this report—homicide occurring in the course of other crime, mass and serial homicide, masculine homicide, intimate homicide, child homicide, elderly homicide, and homicidal women and children.

Preventing Males Killing Males

Preventative strategies discussed later in this chapter relate to preventing children from engaging in lethal violence. If implemented, these strategies would also extend to prevent or reduce the involvement of adult males in violent criminal behaviour. In other words, preventative strategies influencing the behaviour of youth may produce long-term effects, hence contributing to the reduction of violent behaviour when these youth become adults.

However, one cannot solely rely on early intervention mechanisms to prevent future violent behaviour in adults, in particular, adult men. The present study examining men's lethal violence towards other men reported that a majority of these encounters occurred as a result of some argument, usually precipitated by alcohol. When both the victim and the offender had been drinking prior to the homicide incident, the study found that just under half of these incidents occurred in either a street/open area or a recreational location. These findings have important implications for public policy. They seem to indicate that prevention strategies should focus on the environment or the location of such incidents. In other words, preventing male-on-male

violence, in particular lethal violence, may be achieved through the implementation of situational crime prevention strategies. The following section will describe situational crime prevention strategies aimed at reducing violence at specific locations, namely at recreational venues.

Reducing Violence in Licensed Venues

There is consistent literature pointing to a relationship between the presence of a licensed venue and violence in the surrounding area (Roncek and Bell 1981; Roncek and Pravatiner 1989; Roncek and Meier 1991; Block and Block 1995; Makkai 1997). However, this does not necessarily mean that wherever there are licensed venues, violence will occur; violence is usually restricted to a number of “hot spots” of crime (Homel and Clark 1994).

Research examining the physical and social environments of licensed venues have identified a range of features of these venues that may contribute to reducing violence. These features include attractive, nicely furnished, well-maintained bars; comfortable, uncrowded surroundings that promote enjoyment and do not irritate or frustrate people; a social atmosphere with clear rules and limits; practices that discourage drinking to intoxication and foster a positive social atmosphere; and the employment of trained, peace-loving barworkers and security staff (Graham et al. 1980; Homel et al. 1992; Hauritz et al. 1998).

One of the most nationally and internationally cited situational crime prevention programs is the Australian series of “community safety action projects”, aimed at improving the safety of the environments in and around licensed venues (Homel et al. 1997). These programs were implemented first in the south-east Queensland tourist resort of Surfers Paradise, and then replicated in three North Queensland cities (Cairns, Townsville and Mackay).

Previous literature on intervention in licensed venues indicates that features that characterise successful community interventions include:

- Strong directive leadership during the establishment period.
- The mobilisation of community groups concerned about violence and disorder.
- The implementation of a multi-agency approach involving licensees, local government, police, health, and other groups.
- The use of safety audits to engage the local community and identify risks.

- A focus on the way licensed venues are managed (particularly those who cater to large numbers of young people).
- The “re-education” of patrons concerning their role as consumers of “quality hospitality”.
- Attention to situational factors, including serving practices, that promote intoxication and violent confrontations (Homel et al. 1997, p. 266).

Incorporating some of these features, the community safety action project (Surfers Paradise) was designed based on three major strategies. These include:

- The creation of a *Community Forum*, the consequent development of community-based *Task-Groups*, and the implementation of a safety audit.
- The development and implementation of *risk assessments* and *Model House Policies* in licensed premises by the Project Officer and the Queensland Health Department, and the consequent development and implementation of a *Code of Practice* by nightclub managers.
- Improvements in the *external regulation* of licensed premises by police and liquor licensing inspectors, with a particular emphasis on preventative rather than reactive strategies and a focus on prevention of assaults by bouncers, and compliance with provisions of the Liquor Act prohibiting the serving of patrons who are intoxicated (Homel et al. 1997, p. 266).

The evaluation results of the initial Surfers Paradise intervention and those of the replication studies were quite promising. The authors found that all forms of aggression and violence observed within venues declined between 75 per cent and 81 per cent (see Hauritz et al. 1998). They also found that staff and patrons’ behaviours improved in ways that reduced or eliminated some of the risk factors of violence. For example, it was observed that bar staff became friendlier and security staff dealt more effectively in controlling risky features of the environment, such as movement through aisles and around bars, and drunken patrons. Although male and female drinking behaviour did not change, it was noted that there were fewer “rounds of shouting” and that there was a marked decline in the incidence of high levels of male intoxication, suggesting that staff intervened more effectively to prevent and control intoxication. Hauritz et al. (1998, p. 5) note that “responsible beverage service practices were strongly implemented, resulting in a marked reduction in the levels of male intoxication. This appears to have been a key factor in the reduction in physical violence”.

In summary, the results obtained from these replication studies indicate that:

The safety action model is robust as a technique for reducing alcohol related crime and violence ... and will produce positive results in diverse communities, although not all components that were considered important in the Surfers project (such as the establishment of an independent community monitoring committee to oversee self regulation) emerged as essential components in all replication sites (Homel et al. 1997, p. 282).

Reducing Pub Hopping and Related Violence

Other researchers have also reported that “pub hopping” that is, the attendance of numerous licensed venues within a central district, also leads to violence, intimidation, and a variety of crime and incivility. Felson et al. (1997) examined the implementation of a situational crime prevention initiative in the Central Business District (CBD) of the City of Geelong, located on the Victorian coastline south-west of Melbourne. In 1989–90, the Liquor Commission, hotel licensees (publicans), and the police led a cooperative effort—the Accord—to stop pub hopping.

The Accord established a number of strategies to eliminate pub hopping in the CBD. These consisted of:

- The introduction of cover charges to enter bars after 11 pm.
- Removal of exemptions for young women who were used to lure crowds of young men.
- The prohibition of unlimited re-entry when a cover was paid (to discourage movement among establishments).
- The banning of promotional prices for alcoholic drinks, including “happy hours”.
- The introduction of police patrolled and enforced provisions against underage drinkers and drinking in public places.
- The implementation of universal serving policies in order “to discourage those who were underage or already drunk from moving about in search of a weak link” (Felson et al. 1997, p. 116).

In their evaluation, Felson et al. (1997) examined serious assaults at pubs within the Geelong CBD for the year before (1988–89) and 4 years after the Accord (1989/90–1992/93). They compared these changes to the same period

for six other cities in Victoria (Warrnambool, Mildura, Ballarat, Bendigo, Wangaratta, and Morwell). The authors reported that serious assaults declined by 40.5 per cent in the target city (Geelong) but increased by 14.3 per cent in the control cities. "What is perhaps most significant about this is that the police, while not abandoning law enforcement, defined their traditional role as secondary and focussed instead upon crime prevention" (Felson et al. 1997, p. 129).

These results suggest that regulatory and industry initiatives in promoting and implementing responsible serving practices and the introduction of prevention and monitoring regimes for alcohol-related behaviour may have positive effects in reducing alcohol-related violence in or near licensed venues. In addition to these efforts, there are also a number of other situational crime prevention measures that can also be used to reduce the likelihood of violence in public places. These include technologies such as CCTV and the improvement of street lighting.

Closed Circuit Television

Technology has also been used in the prevention of crime (see Grabosky 1998 for a review of technology and crime control). One example is CCTV. CCTV in confined public places and commercial establishments has the potential for deterring crime (by increasing the risks associated with offending) and facilitating in the identification of offenders. CCTV enhances the ability of a designated agency (security or other) to monitor persons in a given area and to notify police for intervention if potential trouble is detected (Grabosky 1998; Eck 1997).

Despite the absence of rigorous evaluation studies examining their effectiveness, CCTVs may still have a role in the prevention of male-on-male violence in public places. For example, through the designated monitoring agency, CCTVs may assist in the identification of potential confrontational incidents between males in public places. Also, CCTVs may contribute to the reduction of violent encounters resulting in death. If altercations between males do occur, the monitoring agency has the capability of responding quickly and alerting police and/or medical assistance. In other words, through the attainment of prompt medical intervention, the likelihood of a fatal outcome due to masculine violence may be lessened.

Improved Street Lighting

Lighting campaigns seek to enhance the ability of people to provide protection for each other (Eck 1997). A number of studies in the United Kingdom have examined the effects of improved street lighting on preventing crime. However, none of the studies examined violence.

It has also been suggested that the relationship between lighting and crime increases is problematic, given that offenders need lighting to detect potential targets and low risk situations (Fleming and Burrows 1986). Nonetheless, improved street lighting may contribute to public safety through increased visibility, and by increasing the risk that offenders will be detected and recognised (Grabosky 1998).

This section has discussed a number of preventative strategies that may be used in the prevention of male-on-male violence, in particular lethal violence. However, in the reading of prevention literature, most studies emphasised the importance of early intervention strategies. The promotion and development of conflict management skills early on in life and the knowledge that there are alternatives to violence in the resolution of disputes may in essence reduce the probability of confrontational encounters and, as a consequence, the incidence of confrontational homicides. Situational crime prevention measures can be considered as a “back-up” in preventing masculine violence through the reduction of locations or situations conducive to violent encounters.

Preventing Intimate Partner Homicide— Victimisation and Offending

This report has demonstrated that a majority of victims of intimate homicide are women killed by their male partners. On the other hand, when homicide was perpetrated by a woman, a male intimate partner was the most likely victim. Commonly, it was also found that when women killed their intimate partners, it was in response to perceived threats or actual repeated violence on behalf of the male victim. Intimate partner homicide is not only a form of domestic violence, it is often a product of domestic violence (Ewing 1997). Given the inter-sexual nature of intimate homicide, it is possible that preventative measures would have a two-pronged effect. That is, the reduction in the possibility of domestic violence episodes escalating to lethal violence, and the reduction in the need by some women who have been

domestically abused to seek lethal self-help by committing intimate homicide. In other words, in the case of a woman who has experienced years of abuse and has finally escaped her abuser, through a number of measures we will aim at preventing a potential homicide.

Since domestic violence is not only a criminal justice issue, but also one of medical health care, mental health, and women's advocacy, a multi-disciplinary response is required to comprehensively address it (Cardarelli 1997; Herbert and Browne 1997; Bergen 1998). Research suggests that there are two ways of conceptualising the prevention of intimate violence: (1) preventing violence from occurring in the first place; or (2) preventing re-abuse and escalation to lethal violence (Morley and Mullender 1994).

Primary Prevention—Public Awareness and Community Education Campaigns

Preventing violence from occurring in the first place is referred to as a primary prevention measure. These measures usually operate at the societal level and are more based in educating the public that domestic violence is unacceptable in any form, emphasising that it is a crime that will not go unpunished (Browne and Herbert 1997). Primary prevention specifically attempts to influence the "root causes" of crime through social, economic, health, and education policies (Korn et al. 1996).

"Two of the greatest advances in "breaking the silence" around domestic violence and by implication leading to its eventual reduction have been to:

- Break the cocoon of privacy with which it has been shrouded.
- Increase the view of the general community that it is a crime and not to be tolerated" (Korn et al. 1996, p. 6).

Although public awareness and media campaigns can raise the awareness and contribute to changing attitudes at all levels, some have questioned the effectiveness of such campaigns in terms of preventing domestic violence. They argue that "while they serve to identify the issue, they fail to address the causes ° therefore they are not preventative" (Lazarus and McCarthy 1990, p. 31). Although education campaigns do not focus on the causes of domestic violence, they do, however, bring the issue out into the open, by publicly proclaiming its unacceptability. "These campaigns attempt to create and mould the context in which specific programs and interventions can be introduced—they open the door to ease their entry" (Korn et al. 1996, p. 7).

Few studies have evaluated the results of specific efforts to change attitudes about partner violence at the community level (Hamby 1998).

There are also a number of educational campaigns aimed at specifically targeting children and younger persons. This is usually achieved through the formal schooling structure, most commonly through a whole-of-school approach to anti-violence. Typically programs addressing domestic violence include the following core messages:

- Violence is a learned behaviour.
- There are alternatives to violence.
- Violence rarely solves problems and usually creates new ones.
- Violence hurts and is not entertaining, fun, or glamorous (Korn et al. 1996).

Secondary Prevention—Preventing Re-Victimisation

A key preventative strategy for intimate partner violence is immediate and effective interventions for victims of abuse in order to minimise the risk of re-victimisation. Strategies aimed at preventing abuse from re-occurring are referred to as secondary prevention measures. These will largely take the form of support through “Domestic Violence Crisis Services” operational in all Australian jurisdictions. Such national services assist in the provision of safe emergency housing, information, counselling, and assistance during the peak life threatening period which is often when women are prepared to leave their violent partner or during the period of estrangement (Wilson and Daly 1993).

Women are also encouraged to obtain legal protection from police and/or courts to prevent further violence from partners (Egger and Stubbs 1993; Stubbs and Powell 1989). In Australia, protection orders are readily available to anyone who fears future violence, regardless of the nature of the relationship with the person they fear (National Committee on Violence Against Women 1993; Trimboli and Bonney 1997; Ferrante et al. 1996). In some instances, it has been speculated that some women are applying for an order more often than they report domestic violence to the police (Ferrante et al. 1996; Egger and Stubbs 1993).

A recent study undertaken by Young et al. (1999) examined the effectiveness of legal protection in preventing repeated violence by comparing the outcomes for women who obtained legal protection from the police or courts

with outcomes for women without legal protection. The study reported that there were a number of differences in the reductions in the severity of violence depending on whether both police and court protection were obtained, or police protection only.

The study showed that contacting both the police and obtaining a court order was more effective than only contacting the police, even though the prevalence of serious physical violence before legal protection was greater in the group of women who did both (70%) than women who only contacted police (46%). However, one of the major findings of the study was that physical abuse did cease over time for most of the young women who were in violent relationships, regardless of whether legal protection was sought.

Although, violence may still recur after legal protection, research suggests that there is usually an attenuation of violence as time passes (Stubbs and Powell 1989; Grau et al. 1985; Sherman 1992; Trimboli and Bonney 1997; Young et al. 1999). As indicated by the DVHP, just over a quarter of the domestic homicide victims in Queensland had a current protection order. Unfortunately, as Sherman et al. (1991) observe, protection orders are worthless against a determined killer.

In the current study, it was reported that one potential risk factor for both homicide victimisation and offending was with regard to “custody of children”. It was found that 1 in 10 intimate homicides are a result of an argument relating to custody or access to children. Similarly, other research indicates that a common complaint from women in violent relationships is that access brings parents back into contact with each other (Wearing 1992). Hore et al. (1996, p. 47), utilising a “place-oriented” strategy (Sherman et al. 1991), suggested that the establishment of community access (contact) services would be a significant step to ensure the safety of those who felt threatened. Such services would allow access (contact) change-overs of children without parents coming into contact with each other, or where contact could be supervised. In essence, minimising the risk of potential violence during access change-overs of children.

In addition, it is also quite important that “fathers” who are seeking to obtain access or custody of their children are *not forgotten*. In a number of murder-suicide incidents, a despondent father upon hearing that he was not granted custody or access to his children was restricted, killed his children and then committed suicide. These findings suggest that there is a real need

to offer support to *both* parties involved in a custody/access dispute,⁶⁹ especially the parent whose access or custody to the children is restricted. Research clearly indicates that murder-suicide incidents (see “The Killing of Children” in this publication) where the biological father murders his children are usually precipitated by the breakdown of a marriage and the wife taking or leaving the children or over custody/access to the children. Fathers who find themselves in such situations need to be aware that there is help available to support them during the difficult periods.

Family courts also need to consider the psychological impact of custody/access decisions on fathers where access has been restricted or custody denied. Although the courts are acting in the best interest of the children, consideration of the psychological impact on each parent is crucial in attempting to prevent murder-suicide within families. Mandatory counselling with the focus on positive “coping mechanisms” may be a viable option for such cases.

Tertiary Prevention—Perpetrator Programs

Tertiary prevention in this field has traditionally focussed on perpetrator programs for men, either voluntary (“socially mandated”) or court mandated (Korn et al. 1996). Men’s programs were developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a parallel development to women’s refuges and shelters. Some suggest that men’s perpetrator programs developed to overcome the “weaknesses” found in traditional individual, couple or family approaches. New strategies that focus on the perpetrator of the violence had to be developed, given the number of concerns raised regarding couple, or family-based approaches (Keys Young 1999). “It soon became apparent that couples counselling was often counterproductive or put the women at great risk of reprisals outside the session so women were often silent about the abuse” (Shaw et al. 1996, p. 127).

The goal of the intervention became ending the batterer’s violence rather than “curing” the individual, marital or family pathology. Holding the individual accountable for his battering became the hallmark of the specialised programs. A recognition of the need for safety and self-determination replaced victim blaming strategies (Stordeur and Stille 1989, p. 17).

⁶⁹ Once an application has been made to the Family Court, both parties are required to undergo counselling as a form of dispute resolution.

Another significant reason advocated by some for offering perpetrator programs is quite simply that men can change:

Men can change their attitudes and behaviour and learn non-violent ways of relating. Although men who use violence do so to gain power and control with damaging effects on others, they also report a range of negative effects for themselves. These include shame, guilt, hating themselves for what they do and frustration for not having the kinds of relationships with their partner and families they would like to have (V-NET 1995).

In Australia, there are a number of men's perpetrator programs operating in most states and territories (see Keys Young 1999 for a review of some of Australia's models of service delivery and an overview of services). Most major reviews of research on program effectiveness reiterate that such research is still largely inconclusive and fraught with methodological difficulties (Keys Young 1999). Nonetheless, Gondolf (1997) after examining the five reviews of 30 "single site" evaluations in the United States concluded that batterer programs "do appear to contribute to the cessation of violence in some men over a 6-month follow up period, but how or why this cessation occurred remains unclear".

Alcohol Abuse

Many believe that the link between drug or alcohol abuse and violence may not be as strong as commonly assumed (Gelles 1993). However, it does seem clear that abuse of alcohol is a substantial risk factor in intrafamilial homicide and that awareness of, and response to, that risk factor may in some instances prevent intimate homicide (Ewing 1997). Both the present study and the study conducted by Trimboli and Bonney (1997) found that arguments about consumption of alcohol or drugs were the main trigger in about a quarter of the intimate homicides (or violent episodes in the case of the Trimboli study).

Furthermore, a number of studies suggest that men who engage in partner abuse may also abuse alcohol (Coleman and Straus 1983; Mouzos 1998). In such cases, "a diversification of interventions may be necessary to accommodate the range of problems faced by violent men" (Mouzos 1998, p. 38). One such service is the "Home Withdrawal Service":

The Home Withdrawal Program offers a safe, supportive option for alcohol and drug withdrawal. Withdrawal occurs in the client's home

environment under the supervision of the Home Withdrawal team and the client's own doctor, with the added support of a family member. It also provides a series of intensive individual consultations over the withdrawal period; followed by ongoing counselling and support including linkage and referral to other services as appropriate for each individual (Heathlands Community Health Service Leaflet 1998).

Declining Trend: A Positive Outlook

Overall, the proportion of intimate partner homicides over the 10-year period examined in this study has remained relatively consistent. On the other hand, a decline in female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide was observed. Increases in the availability of domestic violence services was one of the factors reported to be associated with such a decline (Dugan et al. 1997). This finding provides us with some hope for the future. It gives us an indication that through the provision of preventative measures that focus on the reduction of re-victimisation, and by addressing some of the underlying problems experienced by some in their interpersonal relations—domestic violence, custody/access visits, alcohol/drug abuse, that an overall decrease in intimate partner homicide may be a foreseeable outcome in the near future.

Preventing Child Homicide

In the aftermath of each death of a child, especially those children whose lives are abruptly cut short by homicide, many question “How could this have been prevented?” and “What needs to be done to protect our children?”

As with any violence prevention strategy introduced to address an issue of concern, it will usually be implemented at the three levels discussed above (primary, secondary, and tertiary). The prevention of child abuse and child homicide is no different. Similar to intimate partner homicide, the killing of children can be considered to be part of a much larger problem associated with the abuse and neglect of children—the extreme phenomenon along a continuum of child abuse (Fiala and LaFree 1988).

Given that the present study found that children under the age of 15 were most likely to die as a result of either a domestic dispute between family members with the child being the unintended victim (as in the case where

the refrigerator fell on the baby whilst the parents were arguing), or as a result of fatal abuse/non-accidental injuries, where the motive in certain cases was unclear or trivial, preventative measures should focus specifically on addressing the much larger problem of abuse and neglect of children. “Child abuse and neglect has been recognised as a symptom of significant childrearing problems, often occurring in families with other significant problems” (James 2000). As a result, intervention strategies should, therefore, be directed at the wider at-risk population (Strang 1996).

Primary Prevention—Supporting Families

The primary prevention of child abuse and neglect, and the extreme consequences of such—child homicide, is aimed at preventing child abuse before it occurs. In other words, by offering various support services to all families, problems associated with parenting may be alleviated to some extent (Browne and Herbert 1997).

In the area of primary prevention of child abuse, there are three main approaches:

- To adapt existing services to enhance parental competence, and promote change through parental education.
- To mobilise community resources and offer voluntary assistance through networks and crisis contact services that reduce the social isolation.
- To educate the public through specific projects, such as publicity campaigns which aim to raise public awareness about the prevention of child abuse and neglect (Browne and Herbert 1997, p. 136).

Primary prevention through the education of parents must aim at understanding the problems of parenting and at the same time offer positive suggestions for coping. Research suggests that “much abuse is the consequence of ignorance of reasonable child rearing practices and reasonable expectations of children’s behaviour” (Strang 1996, p. 5). Not only should parents be educated in appropriate disciplinary actions, but also that young children are extremely vulnerable to physical injury. For example, in response to several instances where children died as a result of the “shaken baby syndrome”, both the Victorian and South Australian governments introduced media/advertising campaigns aimed at increasing the public’s awareness of the damaging effects of shaking a baby and the

possible lethal consequences⁷⁰ (Scott 1995; Victorian Department of Human Services 1998).

... in Victoria, if not the rest of Australia, the media coverage of child abuse has played a significant part in the development of “solutions” to the problem. A major restructuring of child protection services, together with a large increase in resources, followed an extensive media campaign (Goddard and Carew 1993).

... another intensive media print campaign followed the death of an abused child referred to the police and protective services, led to the introduction of mandatory reporting in Victoria (Goddard 1996).

As children are most commonly killed by their parents, usually the mother, research suggests that women’s aggression is expressive and represents a loss of control. “Aggressive behaviour for women is a consequence of a mounting anger that develops to a fury that ... erupts into physical aggression” (Campbell 1993, p. 40). When this is considered in light of some of the female offenders’ economic and social circumstances, together with the number of other factors that come into play under the psychological rubric of “stress”, “an image emerges of a woman extremely “stressed”, whose frustration and anger build to the point where she explodes in a highly emotional, uncontrolled moment of violence against her children” (Alder and Polk 1997, p. 6).

In some instances of child homicide, young mothers were ill-prepared, ill-equipped and had little support to enable them to cope with a new and “difficult”, crying baby (Alder and Polk 1997). A step forward in the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect, and ultimately child homicide, is an increased awareness for primary caregivers, especially young mothers, of the services and support available in their local area, that will be able to assist them in dealing with a newborn baby.

At a minimum, there is an obvious need for more and better educational programs aimed at teaching young people how to parent, for such programs could significantly reduce the number of child abuse deaths ... by teaching and reinforcing alternatives to corporal punishment (Ewing 1997, p. 157).

⁷⁰ In South Australia the campaign was termed Don’t Shake the Baby (Scott 1995) and in Victoria the advertising campaign was titled Never Shake a Baby.

In sum, the underlying tenet of parent education is that:

A parent who is well-prepared for the life changes associated with child rearing is less likely to succumb to the increasing stress factors that prevail. This viewpoint supports the principles of preventative mental health—[that] skills, knowledge, and experiences that boost the individual's coping abilities ... will increase their resistance to the forces that oppose their healthy adjustment (Wolfe 1993, p. 98).

Secondary Prevention—Home Visitation Programs

Interventions that are designed to prevent child abuse and neglect at an early stage of inadequate parenting are termed “secondary preventions” (Browne and Herbert 1997). Secondary preventions usually involve the identification of parents at risk of abusing their children—for example, unmarried, disadvantaged, teenaged mothers, and mothers that have demonstrated difficulties in bonding with their children in the perinatal period (Armstrong and Wood 1991)—and providing them with support through periodic visits from public health nurse-educators and/or other child care specialists (Goetting 1995).

Home visitation programs have been considered to be an important facet of a cohesive child abuse prevention strategy. Such services offer a universal primary preventative program with the added flexibility to cater for the needs of “at risk” or maltreating families (Vimpani et al. 1996). Most Australian jurisdictions have some form of postnatal home visitation program (Tomison and Wise 1999).

The common core of home visitation is a visitor who cares about child-raising sitting down in the home with a parent and a child. Visitors can be nurses, social workers, pre-school teachers, psychologist or para-professionals. They can provide cognitive information or emotional support, or both. They can actively teach parents, with hands on the children. Or they can passively watch and listen, merely giving parents a good listening tool. They can be trained in health (like nurses), human development (like psychologists and social worker), cognitive and social skills instruction (like pre-school teachers), or some mixture of these subjects (like para-professionals). They can be experienced or novice, enthusiastic or burned out, assertive or hesitant. But no matter who they are or what they do, they provide a bridge between the parent, usually a mother, and the outside world (Sherman 1997, pp. 4–10).

There are a number of encouraging findings relating to the positive outcomes obtained from home visitation programs. The Prenatal/Early Infancy Project was developed by Olds and his colleagues (1986, 1988, 1997), and received a rigorous evaluation. The findings indicated that high-risk mothers who were visited differed from comparison (control) groups of high-risk mothers who were offered little intervention. The mothers who were visited had more positive perceptions of their infants and inflicted less punishment, which obviously resulted in fewer incidents of child abuse and neglect compared to the control groups.⁷¹ In addition, Olds et al. (1997) also conducted a 15-year follow-up. He found that prenatal and early childhood home visitation had a significant impact on behavioural and developmental outcomes. For example, there was a reduction in subsequent pregnancies, the use of welfare, child maltreatment rates, and criminal behaviour on the part of low-income, unmarried mothers.

Moreover, in terms of evaluated studies, “perhaps the most promising results in all areas of crime prevention are found in the evaluation of home visitation programs” (Sherman 1997, pp. 4–9).

Tertiary Prevention—Learning from Lethal Outcomes

According to research, it is quite unfortunate that tertiary prevention programs are the most common forms of help offered to distressed and disorganised families (Browne and Herbert 1997). The main purpose of tertiary prevention programs is to intervene after the child has been maltreated.

Families in which child abuse is proven pose a major dilemma between family preservation and prevention of recidivism. The many documented deaths and injuries of children after prior reports of abuse underlie the seriousness of the dilemma. But the potential benefits of keeping thousands of families together must be weighted against the cost (Sherman 1997, pp. 4–15).

In Australia, the protection of children from abuse and neglect is legally the responsibility of the community services department in each State and Territory. Under each jurisdiction’s legislation, the community services department has the authority to intervene if they consider it necessary, and to apply to the relevant court to place the child on a care and protection

⁷¹ Training and qualifications of the home visitor are of utmost importance. Olds’ home visitors were qualified paediatric nurses who had undergone a special training program.

order (James 2000). However, the issuing of an order is generally considered as a last resort—"for example, where supervision and therapy are resisted by the family, where the removal of the child to out of home care needs legal authorisation, or where the other avenues for the resolution of the situation are exhausted" (AIHW 1999b).

According to the AIHW (1999b), there were 3.5 per 1,000 children on care and protection orders in Australia in 30 June 1998. Unfortunately, in some instances the state fails to provide adequate protection to a child and the consequence is fatal. In such instances, there is usually public outrage if the case is highlighted in the media, with many questioning "why was this child not protected?".

As previously stated, child protection resources are chiefly expended on tertiary rather than primary prevention and, in some cases, a single episode of abuse may be sufficient to result in a fatal outcome. In other cases, there was a lengthy documented history of prior abuse and numerous contacts with health and welfare professionals. For example, in one recorded case of child homicide, there were 21 contacts with the family in the 2 months prior to the fatal incident, from various individuals and agencies (Strang 1995). This lack of communication and coordination is not restricted to Australia. Several prominent cases in Great Britain have featured well-documented failures in inter-professional communication (Greenland 1987).

Furthermore, Rayner (1994) assessed the Commonwealth Government's role in the prevention of child abuse. The results of the assessment indicated that there was a frequent failure in communication, coordination, and cooperation within and between levels of government and between government departments, between the government and non-government sectors, and within the multitude of non-government agencies that have adopted a preventative role (cited in Tomison 1997). In response to this assessment, a number of strategies have been put forward as a possible means of improving the level of coordination and communication between agencies and departments with a role in preventing child maltreatment.

Some of these strategies include the establishment of:

- Offices for Children and Children's Commissioners.
- Action Plans.
- Child Impact Statements.

Child Death Review Teams

Child Death Review Teams (CDRTs) were established to review child deaths concerning a particular agency (internal) or from the point of view of all agencies (external) (Wilczynski 1997). In addition to reviewing cases of child death and facilitating any follow-up required, CDRTs also perform a variety of immediate and long-term functions.

These include:

- Accurate identification and documentation of the cause of all child fatalities.
- Collection of standardised and accurate data.
- Inter-agency coordination.
- Identification of potentially preventable child deaths.
- The improvement of the investigation and prosecution of maltreatment deaths.
- The development and use of inter-agency policies for investigating certain categories of child fatalities.
- Prompt notification of agencies when a child dies.
- Provision of a safe, confidential arena to facilitate communication between the resolution of inter-agency conflicts.
- Stimulation of required changes in policy, practice, and legislation.
- The identification of public health issues which need to be addressed (Witherspoon 1994, pp. 3–5).

In Australia, most states and territories have some form of internal CDRT and, in addition to New South Wales, several other states have also established, or are in the process of establishing, external CDRTs (Wilczynski 1997).

The potential benefits of CDRTs is that they are able to review cases as soon as they occur. “This ensures that the most up-to-date information on child fatalities is analysed and disseminated, the cases reviewed involve the most current policies of various agencies, and that positive action can be taken where this is considered necessary” (New South Wales CPC 1995, cited in Wilczynski 1997, p. 188).

In sum, CRDTs:

appear to offer the greatest hope of defining the underlying nature and scope of fatalities due to child abuse and neglect ... pinpointing system flaws, and promoting prevention services (United States Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect 1995, p. 28).

A common theme has emerged recently in the literature regarding the most effective approach in preventing child abuse and maltreatment:

Effective child abuse prevention depends on the adoption of holistic, cross-sectoral approaches based on effective coordination, cooperation and communication between all levels of government and between the government and the wider community (Tomison 1997, p. 64).

In essence,

... the protection of children is closely linked to the concept of strengthening families. This in turn, is associated with the need for a general change in community attitudes to reflect the value and importance of children, as well as the need for improvements in income, health and housing so that parents' ability to care for children can be enhanced ... (James 1994, p. 6).

Children must come first in social policies and the allocation of social resources, children must come first in the words and deeds of agencies that are entrusted with protecting them (Gelles 1996, pp. 171–72).

Although, child homicide cannot be entirely prevented, a coordinated effort that combines primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention initiatives will best be able to address the various factors underpinning child abuse and maltreatment and those families most "at risk". Reducing the incidence of child abuse may in turn lower the possibility of such episodes resulting in a lethal outcome.

Preventing Elderly Homicide

The following discussion of various preventative measures to prevent elderly homicide victimisation will be divided into two sections. The first section will focus predominantly on the identification of measures that are aimed at preventing victimisation of the elderly that occur in the course of other crime. The second section will examine briefly the preventative measures designed to reduce the risk of victimisation posed to the elderly by persons known to them, such as family and friends.

Preventing Elderly Homicide in the Course of Other Crime

Elderly persons aged 65 year and over accounted for approximately 7 per cent of all homicide victims across a 10-year period. But they were almost twice as likely to become a victim of a homicide that occurred in the course of other crime, usually a robbery.

It appears that although the elderly's overall risk of violent victimisation is relatively low, the nature of their lifestyle and routine activity patterns may heighten their level of exposure to theft-related situations (for instance, robbery and burglary). Thus for the elderly, the safety of the home is offset by the vulnerability to attack during a crime and the difficulty from recovery from a beating (Kennedy and Silverman 1990).

Given these findings, preventing elderly homicide, especially homicide incidents that occur in the course of other crime, should focus primarily on the reduction in individual susceptibility to criminal harm (Fattah and Sacco 1989). Programs of this type encourage elderly persons to "harden targets", increase personal vigilance, or engage in overt forms of defensive behaviour.

The most popular forms of public policy initiatives have been police sponsored seminars or public information campaigns that are intended to provide individuals with information that allows them to reduce personal risk. Such instructional efforts might focus upon:

- Tips to avoid merchandising fraud.
- Home security techniques.
- Precautions to take while walking in the neighbourhood.
- Self-defence techniques.
- Instruction in the use of the crime prevention hardware (such as deadbolt locks) or property marking techniques (Fattah and Sacco 1989, p. 253).

Target Hardening

As stated, one of the crime prevention measures aimed predominantly at elderly citizens is “target hardening”. Target hardening is one of the oldest forms of crime prevention techniques utilising an approach known as opportunity blocking (Clarke 1992, 1995). Opportunity blocking suggests that making changes to places might prevent criminal events. These changes usually involve making crime more difficult, risky, less rewarding, or less excusable (Clarke 1992, 1995).

There are a number of common preventative measures suggested by Neighbourhood Watch Committees across Australia regarding target hardening and ensuring that one’s home is safe and secure.

These simple strategies include:

- Keeping overgrowth of trees and shrubs to a minimum—“beware of the hiding places in your garden”. Homes that have unrestricted view from the street are not usually targeted.
- Clear, concise house numbers—your house number should be clearly visible from the street.
- Messages—messages left on the door say only one thing: that you are out and when you might expect to return. Never advertise your absence on answering machines.
- Security screen your home—providing locks and improved security to access points is a commonly used burglary prevention tactic (Sherman 1997). Research suggests that installing security locks and using them had a strong impact on preventing burglary (Upton 1997). However, in some instances, deadlocks have prevented persons inside their home from exiting in the case of a fire. In response, a new kind of dead latch has been developed that is a modified form of a conventional lock with a special safety release feature. This lock looks and works just like a conventional dead latch except that when you insert the key from the outside, the lock automatically unlocks itself inside, too (Upton 1997).
- Keeping doors and windows locked whilst at home—all too often unwanted visitors enter dwellings whilst the occupant is home.
- Using automatic sensor lights—installing sensor lights has a variety of benefits. These include: notification is someone comes within range of your property, lighting paths and steps for visiting, and lighting your home at night for greater visibility.

- Having contact with neighbours—research in both the United States and the United Kingdom supports the view that burglars are wary of curious neighbours. “A frequently reported fear among burglars was that neighbours knew better than passers-by who was a stranger in the area, or to the occupants of the dwelling and would be more likely than passers-by to do something about it” (Upton 1997, p. 91). This is particularly important for older Australians. It is usually advisable that a neighbour is aware of your weekly routine, and can seek assistance should they notice any thing out of the ordinary. It is also advisable that you receive social contact (either by a telephone or personal visit by someone you know—friend and relative) on a daily basis, who is then able to contact authorities should they fail to make contact with you on a particular day.⁷²
- The use of new technologies such personal safety alarms.

Older Australians have identified the ability to remain safely at home whilst retaining their independence as a key issue (St John Ambulance of Australia 1999). In order for older persons to remain safe whilst at home, there are a number of services available to assist in educating all persons, and especially older persons on how to protect ones home and oneself.

For example, there are non-government organisations that provide a “home audit” service that assess one’s home in terms of personal, medical, fire safety and security. In essence, such services offer a primary prevention program—that is, preventing the crime before it occurs. For example, in the Australian Capital Territory, the Community Liaison Advisory Safety Project (CLASP) offers home audits to members of the community, with their main target being the elderly (P. Flint, CLASP, personal communication, 25 January 2000). Through such “home audits”, the elderly are informed of a number of preventative measures (as outlined above) which can help make their home safer and less desirable as a target.

⁷² There are a number of community care programs around Australia that assist over-65s to maintain links to the community and retain independence. For example, in Queensland, St John Ambulance has established the Silver Cord Telephone Reassurance Service which pairs elderly people, who may be isolated or housebound, with volunteers who call regularly to check on their health and well-being. These calls quickly become a valuable means of communication for the elderly person and provide a strong sense of security. In addition, in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and Western Australia St John services provide volunteers which visit private homes, nursing homes and supported residential facilities. In Victoria, the “Confident Living for Older Persons” program offers the services of a specially trained volunteer who can provide “safety assessments” of private homes (St John Ambulance Australia 1999). For additional information, please refer to *Home Safe—A Guide to First Aid and Staying Safe at Home*, St John Ambulance Australia 1999.

Evaluation studies of target hardening as a preventative strategy have produced some positive results. The installation of improved locks and doors at 2 English housing complexes was evaluated by Tilly and Webb (1994). They used a pre-post design compared to a control area and they found that in one complex, burglaries declined 59 per cent. In the other, burglaries declined over 90 per cent relative to the control area.

These results suggest that with the introduction of simple measures such as improved locks and doors, the victimisation risk of some persons can be decreased, with them becoming less accessible targets.

Personal Alarm Systems

In addition to these measures outlined, elderly persons may also wish to equip themselves with a personal alarm system. Personal alarm systems come in three different forms: pendant or watch worn by the person, or a wall button. Either a security firm or a health industry firm provide and install the system. The pendant/watch/wall button contains a small radio transmitter connected to a sender box installed in the house. When the pendant/watch/wall button is pressed, the box automatically dials a designated number (either the control centre of the security or health industry firm⁷³) and automatically generates a computer message giving details of the name and location of the activator. A patrol unit is then dispatched to attend the residence (Law Reform Commission of Victoria 1991; P. Flint, CLASP, personal Communication, 25 January 2000).

A less sophisticated system that is not “back to base”, still operates in the same way as described above, however, instead of automatically dialling the control centre’s number, the box dials 1 of 5 numbers (for instance, neighbour, friend, and family member) that have been selected.

Unfortunately, these type of systems are fallible in that they are both dependent on the telephone to send signals to the control centre or some other designated number. Interference with the phone line would defeat the system. However, this risk can be minimised in a number of ways:

- The dialler system automatically makes calls to the control centre to test the equipment. An independent power source is provided in the event of mains failure, leaving the phone off the hook, or unplugging the unit, which allows the system to continue operating.

⁷³ For example, Metropolitan Security Systems and Medalert.

- The dialler unit could be set up in the home where it was not easily accessible. For example, the dialler could be installed in the roof and connected directly to telephone cable outside the house.
- The dialler system could be equipped with a shock sensor which would trigger the alarm if anyone tampered with it. Thus, the system could only be defeated if the connection to the telephone line, or the line itself, was cut (Law Reform Commission Victoria 1991, Appendix 4).

For security purposes, these devices may provide some relief and a sense of security knowing that help is within reach. However, owning a personal alarm system does not mean that other preventative measures are not required. Making one's home less accessible (whether you are home or not) to potential offenders is probably the first step to reducing the risk of victimisation, especially a violent encounter.

Preventing Elderly Homicide Victimisation from Family and Friends

The measures discussed in the previous section are aimed primarily at reducing the risk posed by a stranger to an elderly person. However, as this report has demonstrated, elderly persons are slightly more likely to be victimised by someone known to them (an intimate partner, family, friends, or acquaintances) (56.7%). As noted, in some cases persons who provide care and assistance to the elderly may take advantage of their duty of care position and abuse the elderly person. In preventing the mistreatment of elderly persons, Fattah and Sacco (1989, p. 272) suggest that there are three broad policy questions that need to be addressed:

- How can the placement of elderly persons into situations of potential abuse be prevented?
- How is it possible to prevent the development of social stress that is often to be related to elder mistreatment?
- How is it possible to prevent the social isolation that creates an environment conducive to the development of mistreatment?

A number of preventative programs are aimed at reducing the possibility of situations of abuse arising from inappropriate care arrangements, social stress and isolation. Each of these will be considered in turn.

In keeping with the elderly person's desire to remain at home and independent, there are a number non-institutional community alternatives that are available to assist family members or friends who are involved in a

caregiving role to the elderly person. In addition to those mentioned in the previous section as being offered by St John Ambulance Australia (for instance, telephone reassurance and friendly visitor programs), there are other services on offer. These include meals-on-wheels programs, home care and chore services, transportation programs, and home health care, to mention a few.

Moreover, for those assuming a caregiving role to an elderly person, there is a need to offer an effective instructional program that can educate caregivers of what is required of them and where assistance is necessary is available should they require help. The availability of non-institutional community services not only serves to minimise the development of situations of potential abuse, but also acts to reduce the stress associated with caring for any person, especially the elderly.

Home visit, day-care, and related respite programs can assist in alleviating some of the emotional and physical burden associated with long-term provision of care (O'Malley et al. 1983; Anetzberger 1987). Research also suggests that services which assist in the performance of instrumental care-related tasks such as shopping, exercise, meal preparation, and recreation can also help reduce stress associated with caregiving (Fattah and Sacco 1989).

Regular contact with such services consequently also reduces the feeling of isolation. "Involvement in such activities serves to integrate family members into the wider community while allowing them to derive more direct and tangible benefits" (Hooyman et al. 1982). In addition, greater social integration also promotes empowerment on behalf of the older person and increases their awareness of options regarding their current situation.

However, probably one of the most important functions of social integration for the elderly is that, in the case of abuse and mistreatment, there is a higher probability of detection than if the elderly person was isolated from contact with other persons: "isolation implies that mistreatment remains a low visibility offence" (Fattah and Sacco 1989, p. 274). Early detection and reporting to the appropriate authorities of instances of elder abuse means that potentially lethal abuse may be prevented.

Although the elderly are at a relative low risk of homicide victimisation, the implementation of some of these preventative strategies may inevitably serve to reduce the possibility of an elderly person being subjected to lethal

violence by either a stranger or a caregiver, hence improving and certainly prolonging the lives of many elderly Australians.

Preventing Children Killing

Violence, especially lethal violence tends, to be a problem of adulthood (Polk 1995b). Although this may be the case, the fact that 5 per cent of homicide offenders between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 1999 were aged under 17 years is still a major concern to the general public and policy makers alike.

The so-called “youth” of these offenders provides us with a valuable cue as to how children of future generations can be prevented from becoming involved in situations conducive to homicide; it signals to us that prevention needs to start early. “Early identification and treatment of people with potentially high risks of offending is crucial to prevent violent crime” (Carcach 1997, p. 6).

As noted in the preceding chapter, a number of studies have indicated that there are common background characteristics present in juvenile homicide offenders. For example, Darby et al. (1998) examined the characteristics of 112 juveniles that were convicted of homicide in Missouri, United States. They found that child offenders generally had displayed or experienced severe problems before the homicide in the form of aggressive behaviour, substance use, family abuse, or other difficulties. “Overall, juvenile homicide appears to originate from a problematic background that may create a framework and model for the adolescent’s violent behaviour” (Darby et al. 1998, p. 371).

Consistent with Darby et al. (1998), Busch et al. (1990) attest that children “who murder are ... persons with violent, abusive, inconsistent, and aggressive environments” (p. 484). A finding further supported by Langevin et al. (1983) who state that “cruel and extremely violent parenting seems typical in the childhood of killers” (p. 331). Last but not least, Myers et al. (1995) posit that “the juvenile murderer is typically ... raised in a violent environment and abused by one or more caretakers” (p. 1487).

According to Darby et al. (1998) these factors combined seem to provide some evidence for the “lockage phenomenon”. Briefly, the lockage phenomenon suggests that:

in extremely chaotic families, some adolescents may react to intense pressure via either suicide or homicide. ... the most likely target of these homicidal behaviours would be the family member who has been abusive. However, the youngster may also strike out aggressively toward other, potentially more “safe” targets due to feelings of diffuse and undifferentiated rage and a need for control (Darby et al. 1998, p. 372).

All available evidence on children who kill seems to point in the direction that a majority of these homicide offenders are a product of their environment and upbringing. Although there is not one single factor that can solely account for children engaging in lethal behaviour, this has important implications for prevention: “As the cause of youth violence is multifaceted, so too must be its solution. Parents, the educational system, communities, government leaders, the media, and individuals must work together to foster a healthy next generation” (Heide 1999, p. 241).

Home Environment—The Role of Parents

Most of the preventative strategies described above are wide reaching in the sense that programs designed to prevent domestic violence and child abuse and maltreatment indirectly contribute to the prevention of children engaging in violent behaviour. For example, by preventing situations where children witness domestic violence in the home or are abused themselves, the child does not grow up in an environment that fosters violence and they do not learn to use violence as an acceptable means of resolving disputes. Most research concurs that “the preponderance of violence for most individuals is learned behaviour” (Flannery and Huff 1999, p. 294).

In addition, through parent education and home visitation programs, a child’s early years of life is not marred by abuse and maltreatment. In follow-up interviews with young men who had killed someone during their adolescent years, Heide (1999) noted that these young men repeatedly emphasised the need for greater parental involvement. Moreover, the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health, published by the American Medical Association (1997) found that “parent connectedness” was one of two variables that consistently protected youths from engaging in high risk behaviours that threatened their health. “Youths who felt love, warmth and caring from one or both parents, in contrast to those who did

not, were significantly less likely to engage in violent behaviour ...”
(cited in Heide 1999).

Most parenting programs are targeted at females (National Crime Prevention (NCP) 1999). An Australian project—the *Fun Family Reading Program*, part of *Together for Under Fives and Families* (TUFF) targets the male caregivers and encourages them to take part in some particular activities with their children. For example, read to them or with them as a way of both enjoying time together and helping the child’s performance in school. Although the immediate goal is one of the male caregiver engaging in this activity, the longer term goal is a general improvement in family functioning (NCP 1999).

Research has consistently shown that increasing parental awareness through education not only reduces child neglect and mistreatment from parental ignorance, but also enhances the development of communication, emotional ties, and parent-child bonding. “These factors, in turn, help prevent child maltreatment” (Heide 1992, cited in Heide 1999, p. 270).

Educating Young People

For those children subjected to violence within the family, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs has funded eight community organisations around Australia to develop and run more than 1,200 domestic violence prevention programs for young people, with a significant number being run in regional and remote areas (Partnerships Against Domestic Violence 1999).

Some of these programs include⁷⁴:

- *BIG h’ART*—The Concept of Legacy (Tasmania and New South Wales)—this includes the recent development and establishment of a one-on-one “closed chatline” on the internet for direct counselling and support for young people.
- Partnerships Against Violence Everywhere (PAVE) project (Tasmania)—through a series of workshops, PAVE brings young people and community representatives together to find solutions for their own community in preventing domestic violence.
- Women’s Health in the South East (WHISE) (Victoria)—peer education program with the use of peer educators.

⁷⁴ See also NCP 1999, Table 2.3, pp. 106–16).

- Website Project (Tasmania)—the development of a website to provide young people with information about domestic violence and the *services available*.
- *Be Cool ... Not Cruel* (Northern Territory)—community education program for young people, and includes a range of children’s products, such as booklets, brochures, posters, stickers and show bags, and also a 24-hour dedicated telephone service for young Territorians and their parents.

In addition to community educational programs, the school education system also has a significant role in preventing children killing. “There are many ways in which the educational system can help youths rebound from unhealthy influences in their homes and neighbourhoods and develop into healthier human beings” (American Psychological Society 1993, cited in Heide 1999, p. 245).

Heide (1999, adapted from Table 13.1, p. 245) suggests the following strategies that the educational system could implement in the aim of preventing youth violence:

- Design courses to identify child maltreatment (kindergarten through year 12).
- Provide information on the effects of parental chemical dependency.
- Establish support groups for teenagers.
- Improve communication skills.
- Foster self-esteem.
- Provide social skills training.
- Teach conflict resolution—anger management.
- Teach techniques to help youth deal with feelings and to develop self-control anger management.
- Develop moral reasoning.
- Encourage understanding of cultural differences.
- Set appropriate limits regarding acceptable behaviour.
- Provide a supportive network.
- Encourage greater involvement by teachers.

Also mentoring programs, which introduce long-term older counsellors into boys' lives, have demonstrated success, especially in reducing the numbers of people using drugs. There also appears to be an effect on reducing violence, as there was also a reduction in the frequency of hitting someone (Sherman 1997, pp. 3–24).

Given the findings outlined in this report—that a majority of child homicide offenders in Australia killed in groups of 2 or more, and that 2 out of 5 child offenders killed in the course of another crime, usually motivated by the need to acquire money/drugs/property, it is important to include in the educational curriculum, drug and alcohol education, and mechanisms to overcome “peer group pressure”.

Employment/Recreational Facilities

Research indicates that when Australian children kill, they do so to acquire money/drugs/property (most likely to sell for money or drugs). This has a number of implications. Firstly, it would seem to imply that youth may require greater access to employment opportunities. Secondly, it may suggest that youth are in need of greater access to drug rehabilitation programs or counselling for youth with a drug dependency. And thirdly, it may imply that there is a need to establish more programs to deal with youth boredom. Heide (1999) indicated that many of the young killers that she evaluated in the United States were neither committed to nor involved in conventional and prosocial activities such as school, sports, and work.

Lacking such “bonds” these youth had the free time and often developed the concomitant belief system needed to commit crimes. They fashioned themselves as “players” in the game of life, and they went out to have “a good time”. For these adolescents, robbing and using guns seemed like fun and a way in which to reduce boredom. Many killers explained that on the nights of the homicides, they were hanging out with other boys drinking and doing drugs, when one suggested that they rob somebody ... something happened in the interchange, typically, quite unexpectedly, that turned the robberies into homicides (pp. 47–48).

As Heide (1999) observed in her study of juvenile homicide in the United States that “something unexpected happened that turned the robberies into homicides”, this is also characteristic of a number of homicides committed by children in the course of another crime here in Australia. Two out of many examples: “the victim resisted” (case study 26) or a common scenario

where “the victim returned home unexpectedly and confronted the offender” (case study 27).

It is important to keep in mind that very few children in Australia engage in lethal behaviour—an average of 17 children per year. However, it is still a significant concern and the focus of many prevention programs. Investing time and resources in children of today will benefit the adults of tomorrow.

Concluding Comments

With every research study conducted, and with every report published, a sense of hope follows. Hope that the analyses undertaken, the interpretations made, and the recommendations or prevention strategies put forward are used in some form to better our society. Realistically, we know that homicide can never be entirely prevented. However, this does not preclude researchers from trying to better understand its dynamics, its causes, and the various situational circumstances and victim and offender interactions that lead up to, as well as during and after, the event.

Although, this study covered the incident, victim, offender characteristics, and the relationship between the victim and the offender over a 10-year period, it is important to note that, this study was not intended to be an exhaustive account of all the possible homicidal encounters that occur in Australia. Rather this 10-year report has examined in-depth the most common encounters leading to a lethal outcome in Australia. In addition, throughout this report, a number of issues have been raised which should provide fertile areas for future research. Some of these have been incorporated into the NHMP’s research agenda.

Future research includes an examination of:

- Homicide between friends and acquaintances.
- The licensing and registration status of firearms used in homicide.
- Indigenous homicide in Australia: Patterns and trends in victimisation and offending.
- Multiple homicide in Australia.
- Criminal Careers of Homicide Offenders.
- Following NHMP data collection for the year 1999/2000, an updated report of Homicide in Australia 1999–2000.

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Appendix 1:

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- Strang, H. 1990, *Homicides in Australia 1989–90*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
- Strang, H. 1991, *Homicides in Australia 1990–91*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
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