

Homicide in Australia

2003–2004 National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) Annual Report

Jenny Mouzos

Research and Public Policy Series

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Please note that, as with all statistical reports, there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report over its life. The online version at www.aic.gov.au is the current correct version.

From the Director of the AIC

Fifteen years ago, the report *Violence: directions for Australia* recognised that there was little information available on the characteristics and circumstances that lead to the occurrence of homicide in Australia. This empirical information was needed to better inform public discussion and enable formulation of policy in the area of violence. In response to this need, the National homicide monitoring program (NHMP) was established at the Australian Institute of Criminology in 1990.

This report presents tabulated findings of the fifteenth year of homicide data collection, and provides an accurate account of the characteristics of victims and offenders of homicide, as well as the circumstances of the incidents for the 2003–04 financial year. Jurisdictional breakdowns are also provided for comparative purposes. In 2003–04 a total of 288 incidents of homicide were recorded, committed by 310 offenders, resulting in 305 victims. This is a slight decrease compared with the previous year.

In terms of basic sociodemographic characteristics, both offenders and victims are more likely to be male, aged in their thirties and to know each other. There are, however, noticeable differences between types of homicides, particularly where an intimate partner is involved or the victim is a child. Similar to previous years, homicides were most likely to occur in residential locations (57 per cent of victims) and the most common type of weapon was a knife (32 per cent of victims). Further details are provided in the report.

The NHMP data are increasingly being recognised for their wealth of information provided, demonstrating the returns of long-term investment in a national monitoring program. A recent example of the data informing public policy is the extent to which NHMP data are utilised by the Productivity Commission's *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators 2005 report*. Another equally important outcome is the extent to which NHMP data help inform practitioners. In recent times, the data have been used to aid police investigations and assist in the prosecution of offenders.

Throughout the year, the AIC has released a number of publications using NHMP data and these are available on the internet. A full reference list of NHMP publications is located at <http://www.aic.gov.au/research/projects/0001-docs.html>.

Toni Makkai
Director
Australian Institute of Criminology

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Disclaimer

This research report does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Australian Government.

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NHMP 2003–2004 summary

It has been fifteen years since the National homicide monitoring program (NHMP) began collecting data on Australian homicides. Since that time, the data have been used by many agencies, numerous reports and articles have been written, and presentations have been delivered. The main aim of the dissemination of the NHMP data and related research has been to improve our understanding of the most serious offence in the criminal calendar. The availability of longitudinal data on homicide facilitates the monitoring of trends and patterns over time in the circumstances and characteristics of homicide. It also offers a picture of how the nature of homicide in Australia has changed, and where the focus of prevention and intervention strategies should be.

So, has the nature of homicide in 2003–04 changed? Some things have not changed. Despite many factors coming into play in determining whether a homicide will occur, some of these factors remain consistent predictors each year. Disputes are the most common type of homicide; male intimate partners pose the greatest risk to females, whereas males are more likely to meet their death at the hands of a friend or acquaintance. During 2003–04, Australians aged between 20 and 24 years were most at risk of homicide victimisation. The majority of children under the age of five years are killed by a parent. Young children, especially girls, are particularly vulnerable.

Australians are less likely to be killed by a firearm now than 15 years ago, although over half of all firearms homicides are committed with handguns. Very few firearms used in homicide are registered or the offenders licensed. Weapons of opportunity predominate in homicide, with females more likely to be beaten to death, whereas males are more likely to be knifed to death. Most homicides occur in residential premises, although there has been an increasing trend in the proportion of homicides occurring on the street or in an open area. A third of all homicide incidents occur on Fridays and Saturdays, usually during the hours where people are out socialising or at entertainment venues or facilities. Few homicide incidents occur during the day, especially on weekdays.

This year has recorded the lowest number of homicide incidents and victims in Australia since the AIC began monitoring in 1989. Compared with the previous year (2002–03) there was a slight decline in the number of homicide incidents and victims (3% decrease for incidents; 6% decrease for victims). The downward trend observed in the previous year has continued during 2003–04. New South Wales recorded the largest decline in homicides in 2003–04, with a total of 85 victims, down from 99 victims in 2002–03, representing a 14 per cent decrease compared with the previous year.

Documenting these changes is extremely important. Homicide can be characterised as a fairly reliable barometer of all violent crime, and no other crime in Australia is measured as accurately and precisely as homicide. As a data source, the NHMP is recognised both nationally and internationally as one of the pre-eminent homicide data collection programs. It is essential that NHMP data are accessible to, and utilised by, all stakeholders, particularly those who play a key role in the provision of the data given its central role in identifying homicide patterns and trends. The purpose of this report is to provide accurate and timely data that can:

- inform resource allocations;
- guide key strategic, tactical and operational directions (particularly for the police and other related agencies);

- provide the foundation for policy development directions; and
- identify key knowledge gaps to direct future research.

As the rate of homicide appears to be decreasing, many question ‘how low can it go?’ Realistically, homicide can never be entirely prevented, but it is the goal of public policy-makers, researchers and practitioners to develop strategies that continue to reduce it. In an attempt to provide as much information as possible on the circumstances and characteristics of homicide in Australia, this report includes an additional section that gives an overview of the types of homicidal encounters in Australia: intimate partner violence, child homicide, homicide between persons known to each other, and stranger-related murders.

Methodology

There are two key sources of data for the NHMP:

- offence records derived from each Australian state and territory police service, supplemented where necessary with information provided directly by investigating police officers, and/or associated staff; and
- state coronial¹ records such as toxicology and post-mortem reports.² As of 1 July 2001, the National coroners information system (NCIS) enabled toxicology reports to be accessible online.³

The data is supplemented by press clippings, which are sorted according to incident and filed with the offence report. Nationwide newspaper media are canvassed on a daily basis by staff at the JV Barry Library. These clippings are then provided to the NHMP.

Information for the NHMP is collected annually on all homicides coming to the attention of police services throughout Australia. There are 77 variables in the NHMP data set, divided into three key areas: incident data, victim-related data and offender-related data (outlined below). The first stage of the data collection process involves obtaining hard copies of police offence reports. These are forwarded directly to the AIC. This process occurs during August and September. Following this process, all relevant information relating to the 77 variables is extracted for each homicide incident and entered into the NHMP database. Data are arranged into three hierarchical Statistical analysis system (SAS) data sets:⁴

1. incident file, which describes the case and its circumstances (for instance, location, date and time of the incident, status of investigation, whether the incident occurred during the course of another crime);

1 The law in each state and territory requires that all violent and unnatural deaths be reported to the coroner.

2 As of 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 is also collected from coronial files from each state and territory.

3 The NHMP submitted an ethics application to the Monash University National Centre for Coronial Information (MUNCCI) to obtain access to the NCIS. Access was granted on a fee for service basis.

4 As of 1 July 2005, NHMP data sets will be housed in Stata.

2. victim file, which contains sociodemographic information relating to the victim/s, details relating to the cause of death, the type of weapon used to kill the victims, alcohol and illicit/prescription drug use; and
3. offender file,⁵ which relates to persons who have been charged and includes data on the sociodemographic characteristics of the offender, his/her previous criminal history, alcohol/illicit drug use, mental health status, and the offender's relationship to the victim.

It is important to note that not all information collected by the NHMP is available in police offence reports. In many instances, staff within homicide squads or major crime units track down the missing information through other information sources (usually contacting the investigating officer) and supply it to the NHMP. Without this information, there would be many gaps, and questions left unanswered. Ultimately, this demonstrates that the collection of annual homicide data in Australia is a team effort and is made possible by the ongoing support of all state and territory police services.

The NHMP has been collecting data since 1989 and is currently in the fifteenth year of collection, covering the period from 1 July 1989 to 30 June 2004. Included in the data set are:⁶

- 4,696 homicide incidents;
- 5,050 victims; and
- 5,124 homicide offenders.

The data in this publication may differ slightly from previously published figures because of updates to the data files.

Quality control of data

As the most extreme offence committed against an individual, it is essential that homicide figures provided by the NHMP are a true reflection of lethal violence in Australia. In order to ensure the accuracy of the data from which homicide in Australia is analysed and quantified, a rigorous quality control process is undertaken.

The NHMP quality control process involves crosschecking information contained in each police offence report of murder and manslaughter with information from the additional data sources. As outlined earlier, these supplementary sources include post-mortem reports, information provided by other agencies within the police service (statistical services, homicide squads/major crime units), and press clippings. If a discrepancy arises between information provided in the police offence

⁵ At all times, the term 'offender' refers to alleged offenders only, and not to convicted persons, unless otherwise stated.

⁶ It should be noted that the size of the files for each homicide incident differs in some instances due to data limitations, and the fact that some cases involve more than one victim and/or offender.

report and one of the additional sources, then the original source is queried. Depending upon the accuracy of the additional source, and the information provided in response to the NHMP query, the data relating to the homicide incident in the NHMP is updated accordingly.

A report detailing the NHMP quality control process, *Quality control in the National homicide monitoring program* (Mouzos 2002a), provides a comprehensive examination of this process and cites examples of identified inconsistencies in the various data sources. The data discrepancies that arise vary, from conflicting data such as employment status or age, to the identification of cases that have remained on file as they were originally recorded and investigated as homicides but have subsequently been unsubstantiated or found to involve no suspicious circumstances or third-party involvement, for example, where an individual may have died from natural causes. This report highlights the quality control undertaken in the data collection, entry and analysis of the NHMP data that has been developed to ensure the information provided to key stakeholders and the general public is an accurate portrayal of this most serious criminal offence.

Definition of homicide

The term 'homicide' refers to a person killed, while a 'homicide incident' is an event in which one or more persons are killed at the same place and time. Homicide is defined by the criminal law of each Australian state and territory. The specific wording of the definition varies somewhat between states and territories in terms of degree, culpability and intent. 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 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 homicide (including infanticide), even though no 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 homicides, including incidents involving police in the course of their duties, are also excluded.

Homicide in Australia

The incidence of homicide in Australia has continued to decline in 2003–04, recording a three per cent decrease compared with the previous year. It is important to emphasise that the incidence of homicide is marked by yearly fluctuations and a great deal of volatility in the trend over time due to the small number of incidents. Time-series analysis was conducted on the annual incidence of homicide. Results indicate that the overall trend in the incidence of homicide has remained stable

over the years, with no significant increase or decrease over the 15-year period. In terms of yearly trends, the current year recorded the lowest number of incidents and victims. The year 2001–02 recorded the highest, with 354 incidents. Attention will be paid to identifying specific factors that have contributed to the decline in homicide in Australia.

Homicide incidents

During the 2003–04 reporting period, 288 homicide incidents occurred in Australia.⁷ This is nine fewer homicide incidents than occurred in the preceding reporting period (a decline of approximately three per cent). New South Wales experienced an 18 per cent decline in the number of homicide incidents in 2003–04, compared with the previous year. The Northern Territory and Tasmania also experienced declines in the incidence of homicide. In contrast, the remaining jurisdictions recorded small increases.

At the time of data collection it appears the majority of homicide incidents in Australia result from an act classified as murder (86%), followed by acts deemed to be manslaughter (10%) or infanticide (4%). This distinction between the various ‘degrees’ of homicide can and does change once an offender has been charged and the matter proceeds to court. As in previous years, an offender has been identified in the majority of homicide incidents recorded for 2003–04, with an offender yet to be identified in 14 per cent (n=39) of the 288 incidents. Many characteristics of the typical homicide incident have remained unchanged over the years. As in previous years, most solved homicide incidents (n=249) involved one-on-one interactions between a victim and an offender (82%), 14 per cent involved a single victim and multiple offenders, while five per cent of incidents involved multiple victims (of which only one of 11 incidents involved multiple offenders).

A jurisdictional comparison reveals that South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory did not record any incidents with multiple victims. In the previous year a number of states experienced an increase in multiple victim incidents, especially Victoria which increased from five per cent in 2001–02 to 16 per cent in 2002–03. In the current year, seven per cent of homicide incidents in Victoria involved multiple victims (n=5) and there were no triple homicides. Queensland also recorded a drop in multiple victim incidents, with seven per cent of incidents involving multiple victims in 2003–04 compared with 12 per cent the previous year. As will be demonstrated later in the report, this decline is largely driven by a decline in family homicides. During 2002–03 the Northern Territory recorded its first double homicide since 1989–90. This trend was also observed in the current year, with the occurrence of another double homicide.

Temporal characteristics

During 2002–03, a shift was noted in the temporal characteristics of homicide, with homicide incidents most commonly occurring on a Friday (17%), Monday (16%) or Wednesday (15%). In 2003–04, a higher proportion of homicides occurred on Thursday (15%), Friday (17%) or Saturday (18%). Over

⁷ This includes six incidents that did not occur during the 2003–04 reporting period, but were recorded by police during this time.

the years, these days, and especially Friday, have been the days of the week that are consistent risk markers for homicide. There are a number of possible explanations for this pattern. Firstly, most payments, be they unemployment benefits or wages or pensions, are received on a Thursday. In terms of leisure activities, most people tend to socialise on a Friday or Saturday evening. Given that homicide is a social interaction requiring two or more persons to come together, it makes sense that the days in which social interactions increase are also those in which a homicide is most likely to occur. Other research has also found that Thursday is the day of the week in which the highest number of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons are taken into police custody. This differs slightly for persons charged with the offence of public drunkenness, with more non-Indigenous persons taken into custody for public drunkenness on a Thursday or Friday, compared with a Saturday or Sunday for Indigenous persons (see Taylor & Bareja 2005). These patterns are also fairly consistent across the jurisdictions. A higher proportion of homicide incidents occurred on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday compared with all other days in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

The same explanation regarding the day of the week in which most homicide incidents occur also applies to the time of day that most homicide incidents occur. Homicide in Australia usually occurs during the 12-hour period between 6pm and 6am. In 2003–04, 67 per cent of homicide incidents occurred at this time. Only one in 10 homicide incidents occurred between 6am and noon (13%).

One of the oldest propositions in criminology is that, in accordance with ‘thermic law’, a relationship exists between violent crime and hot weather (see Cohen 1941). The literature, however, reports contradictory findings on the link between homicide and seasonality (Anderson 1987; Cheatwood 1988, 1995; Land, McCall & Cohen 1990; Tennenbaum & Fink 1994). There appears to be little seasonal variation in homicide in Australia. During 2003–04, the majority of offences occurred in August 2003 (12%) and January 2004 (12%), followed by September (11%) then May and November (9% respectively). Across the reporting year, however, the number of offences per month remained consistent.

Data regarding the locational characteristics of homicide incidents indicate that the majority of offences occurred in a residential premise (57%), a similar proportion as previous years. A further 30 per cent occurred in a street or open area; an increase from 21 per cent in the previous year. This pattern was consistent for the majority of jurisdictions, with a higher proportion of homicide incidents in Queensland occurring in a residential premise (70%), compared with other jurisdictions such as Victoria and New South Wales (where half of all incidents occurred in a residential location). Victoria and the Northern Territory also recorded a higher proportion of incidents occurring on a street or open area (43% and 36% respectively).

In criminological research there has been much focus on trying to understand the reasons people engage in lethal violence. The motive of the offender is often used to offer some type of explanation as to the reasons behind the homicide. Motives have been further classified based on an ‘instrumental’ versus ‘expressive’ dichotomy. Instrumental homicides are those conducted for explicit future goals, such as to acquire money or improve one’s social position. An example is the contract killing of a prominent NSW MP in 1994. In that case the motive for the murder was ‘naked political ambition and impatience’: *R v Ngo* [2001] NSWSC 1021 (14 November 2001) (see also Mouzos & Venditto

2003). Expressive homicides are often unplanned acts of rage, anger or frustration (see Block 1976; Block & Christakos 1995; Siegel 1998). This dichotomy is analogous to that of the planned (premeditated) versus spontaneous ('heat of passion') type homicides.

One of the most common types of instrumental homicide are those that occur during the commission of another crime, such as a robbery. Previous research indicates that one of the main motivating factors for armed robbers is acquiring money, property and/or drugs (see Gabor et al 1987; Borzycki, Sakurai & Mouzos 2005). An examination of armed robbery in Australia during 2003 reveals that the most common type of property stolen was cash (27%), mobile phones and accessories (16%), identity documents (12%), credit/debit cards (9%), wallets, purses, handbags and briefcases (8%) (Borzycki, Sakurai & Mouzos 2005).

In 2003–04, 39 homicide incidents (14%) occurred during the course of another crime, higher than the previous year, but the same as in 2001–02. The majority of these incidents (62%) occurred during a robbery (31%), a break and enter (13%) or a theft (18%). Compared with the previous year, there seems to have been an increase in the number of homicides occurring during the course of a sexual assault. In 2002–03 there was one incident recorded, compared with nine incidents in 2003–04. Given the greater awareness of sexual assault as an issue of concern in recent years, this increase may be a function of better recording practices.

It is important to note that while a number of incidents have been identified as occurring in the course of another crime, it is difficult to determine:

- whether the 'other crime' precipitated the homicide;
- whether the homicide was committed due to unexpected situational factors that arose, in order to cover up the other crime; or
- whether the homicide was the primary intention, with another crime being committed immediately preceding or following the homicide.

For example, in the situation where a burglar sets out to break into a property and, unbeknown to him/her the owner is home, a confrontation may ensue where the property owner is killed. The primary motive would have been to steal property, with homicide the unintended outcome. There are a couple of similar incidents that occurred in Australia during 2003–04. For example, three offenders broke into a victim's house with the intention to steal drugs supposedly owned by the victim. The victim disturbed the offenders and was subsequently bashed. It turns out that the offenders had gone to the wrong house, and it was a case of 'mistaken identity' (case no 199/04). In another case, the victim was killed when he disturbed the offender trying to break into his car (case no 202/04). In an incident of road violence, a young child was inadvertently killed when the offender followed the intended victim home (case no. 258/04). Arson is another good example, with fire being used to cover up the act of murder. In such incidents, the absence of soot in the victim's airway, and toxicologic analysis of blood taken from the victim, can reveal the absence of products of combustion (that is, the cocktail of chemicals usually present in smoke; Moore 2004). This indicates that the victim was not alive at the time of the fire, and that there is a high possibility the fire was started to cover up the victim's murder (case no. 034/04).

Homicide victims

Homicide victimisation in 2003–04 occurred at a rate of 1.5 per 100,000 Australians and was the lowest recorded rate since the inception of the NHMP in 1990. Compared with the previous year, the number of homicide victims in Australia decreased by six per cent, from 324 victims in 2002–03 to 305 victims of homicide in 2003–04. Over the fifteen-year period, the rate of homicide has fluctuated, ranging from a low of 1.5 per 100,000 persons to a high of 2.0 per 100,000 persons in the Australian population. A jurisdictional comparison reveals that New South Wales, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory recorded a homicide victimisation rate lower than the national average. While there were only 12 victims of homicide in the Northern Territory in 2003–04, the rate of homicide there has consistently been greater than the national average (Mouzos 2000, 2002b; Mouzos & Segrave 2004). Since 2002–03, the rate of homicide in the Northern Territory has continued to decrease from 11.5 in 2001–02 to 8.6 in 2002–03 and 6.0 in 2003–04 (which is four times the national homicide victimisation rate).

Demographics

The risk of homicide victimisation is not the same for all Australians. The existence of national databases such as the NHMP allows for the identification of risk markers, and to determine whether those markers are static (that is, they remain the same) or dynamic (that is, they change over time). A phenomenon that is consistently supported by the annual NHMP data and by international homicide victimisation research is the gendered nature of homicide. Men are most commonly the victims of homicide (see for example Brookman 2005; Polk 1994; Mouzos 2000, 2002a, 2003b; Mouzos & Segrave 2004; Flowers 2002; Miethe & Regoeczi 2004). During 2003–04, males accounted for 64 per cent of homicide victims, at a rate of 2 per 100,000 of the male population, twice the rate of female homicide victimisation (1.1 per 100,000 of the Australian female population). Compared with the previous year, the number of males who were victims of homicide decreased by 10 per cent, while the number of female victims increased by two per cent in Australia. In New South Wales, the decrease in homicide victimisation was largely driven by the decrease in male victims. There was a 23 per cent decrease in the number of male homicide victims in 2003–04 compared with 2002–03.

Homicide victimisation at the jurisdictional level tends to vary somewhat from the national overview of victimisation. Compared with the national average, a greater proportion of females were the victims of homicide in Western Australia (n=18; 49%), whereas males accounted for a higher proportion of victims in South Australia (n=20; 71%). Throughout the section outlining the 2003–04 findings, there is one victim who has been excluded from any gendered analysis. This is because of an incident involving two victims, one of which was an unborn baby whose gender was not recorded in police offence reports.

Similar to gender, age is a variable that has remained relatively consistent over the 15-year period. The mean age of homicide victims during 2003–04 was 35 years, the same as for the previous year. There was little gender differentiation in terms of mean age. Male victims were slightly older (mean age of 36 years) than female victims (mean age of 34 years). With the exception of the

smaller jurisdictions that recorded very few homicides, female victims in Victoria were older than their state counterparts (mean age of 44 years).

It was noted in the 2002–03 NHMP annual report that the risk of homicide victimisation according to age group had shifted, and that persons aged 25 to 29 years were the most at-risk age group, with a rate of 3.0 per 100,000 of the Australian population (see Mouzos & Segrave 2004). For the year 2003–04, it seems that the risk of homicide victimisation is shifting towards younger persons, with those aged between 20 to 24 years most at risk of victimisation (rate of 2.4). This may be because of the divergence in victimisation for males and females. For example, males aged between 35 and 39 years had the highest risk of victimisation, whereas females aged between zero and four years were most at risk (rate of 2.4 per 100,000 population). As has been observed for a number of years (see Mouzos 2003b), persons who are most vulnerable, such as the very young and older persons, tend to experience a high rate of victimisation. In 2003–04, persons aged less than five years recorded a homicide victimisation rate of 2.1 and persons aged 80 years and older experienced a victimisation rate of 1.2 per 100,000. There was a total of 12 infants (aged less than one year) killed in 2003–04, of whom five were killed in Queensland (42%).

Few jurisdictions publish data in relation to risk of victimisation based on ethnicity or country of birth.⁸ This is mainly to avoid an undue focus on ethnicity in the absence of other factors. The NHMP does collect information on the racial appearance of both victims and offenders. These data are derived from police records and are only indicative of the racial appearance of the victim (and offender). In most cases this is based on a subjective assessment made by police. As a result, caution should be exercised in the interpretation of data relating to racial appearance. The majority of homicide victims in Australia during 2003–04 were of Caucasian appearance (71% males; 73% females), a finding that is consistent across the 15 years. Overall, Indigenous persons accounted for 12 per cent of homicide victims, followed by victims of Asian appearance at 10 per cent. The Northern Territory, which has the highest proportion of Indigenous inhabitants, also recorded the highest proportion of both male and female Indigenous homicide victims (75% and 50% respectively). The disproportionate victimisation of Indigenous persons is a finding that is not restricted to homicide. A survey examining women's experiences of non-lethal physical and sexual violence in Australia also found that Indigenous women reported higher levels of violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts. During the 12-month period preceding the survey,⁹ about seven per cent of non-Indigenous women reported experiencing physical violence, compared with 20 per cent of Indigenous women. Three times as many Indigenous women reported experiencing an incident of sexual violence, compared with non-Indigenous women (12% versus 4%) (Mouzos & Makkai 2004).

Given the gendered nature of homicide, differences have also been noted in the sociodemographic characteristics of male and female victims (and offenders) (see Brookman 2005; Mouzos 2003c; Polk 1994; Miethe & Regoeczi 2004; Flowers 2002). The following gender differentials were noted

8 Of all state and territory police services, only two (Victoria and Western Australia) publish data on racial appearance and/or country of birth.

9 The Australian component of the International violence against women survey (IVAWS) was conducted between December 2002 and June 2003 (Mouzos & Makkai 2004).

in homicide victimisation during 2003–04. Compared with female homicide victims, male homicide victims were:

- more likely to be single at the time of the incident (50%);
- more likely to be employed (42%); and
- more likely to be involved in prior criminal activities (58%).

In contrast, female homicide victims at the time of the offence were:

- more likely to be married or in a de facto relationship (42%);
- less likely to be employed (32%);¹⁰ and
- less likely to be involved in prior criminal activities (22%).

In general, however, the data indicate that while the proportion of homicide victims may fluctuate from year to year, the groups within the population most at risk of victimisation have changed very little.

Precipitating factors

There is some debate as to whether the consumption of alcohol and/or illicit drugs prior to the homicide incident can be considered a precipitating factor. With the use of toxicology results it can be determined whether the victim had consumed alcohol and/or illicit drugs prior to the homicide occurring. This information cannot indicate how the person was affected physiologically (unless the amount consumed was at a relatively high level) or whether the person's alcohol or drug taking directly precipitated the homicide. A prime example is cannabis. Toxicology reports may indicate the presence of cannabis (THC – 11nor9carboxydelta9tetrahydrocannabinol) in blood or urine, but this can be detected in urine up to 30 days after use (see Makkai 2000). It is therefore problematic to assume a cause and effect relationship between alcohol/illicit drug use and lethal violence.

Of the 297 homicide victims for whom data were available from toxicology reports and additional records for 2003–04, there were some differences on the basis of the gender of the victim. A higher proportion of female victims than male victims did not use any substance at the time of the incident (59% versus 47%). However, almost three times as many female victims had tested positive to illicit/prescription drugs compared with male victims (13% versus 5%). This finding corresponds with research from the Drug use monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program, where a higher proportion of females than males during 2003 tested positive to methylamphetamines (41% versus 28%), heroin (23% versus 14%) or benzodiazepines (40% versus 24%) (Milner, Mouzos & Makkai 2004). Alcohol was the most frequently used substance for both males (31%) and females (20%) prior to their death.

¹⁰ 'Employed' does not include those victims whose employment status was recorded as domestic duties. This accounted for 11 per cent of all female victims and less than one per cent of males (n=1).

Poly-substance use was observed in a number of cases, as was a high level of alcohol consumption. For example:

- alcohol (0.258g/100mL) (case no. 121/04) – approximately five times the legal driving limit.
- alcohol (0.246g/100mL) and cannabis (case no 143/04)
- alcohol and cannabis (case nos 149/04, 193/04)
- alcohol (0.143g/100mL) and MDMA ('ecstasy') (case no. 119/04)
- alcohol and amphetamines (case no.124/04)
- cannabis and amphetamines (case nos 067/04, 084/04)
- cannabis and cocaine (case no. 038/04)
- cannabis and heroin (case no. 173/04)
- amphetamines and morphine (case no. 391/04)

Information regarding the mental status of the offender, including the identification of the offender as suffering from a mental disorder immediately before or at the time of the incident, is contained in police offence reports. These may or may not be based on an official medical diagnosis. During 2003–04, seven per cent of victims (n=22) were killed by a mentally disordered offender.

Earlier in this report, discussion centred on the classifications attributed to the motive of the offender, that is, whether his or her actions were instrumental or expressive. Human behaviour is complex and surrounded by a great deal of uncertainty. It is difficult to ascribe a single reason or motive to a homicide when in actual fact the reasons or lack thereof may be varied and complicated. Some argue that the expressive–instrumental dichotomy should not be viewed as a dichotomy, but as different points along a continuum (Block & Block 1993; Miethe & Regoeczi 2004), and that homicide is in fact the result of a series of events (Block & Christakos 1995). Previous research on women as homicide offenders finds that the reasons they kill may depend largely upon who the victim is and the situational context. Why a woman kills her crying infant is completely different from why she kills an acquaintance who has 'ripped her off' in a drug deal (Mouzos 2003c). Similarly, women and men who kill their husbands/wives or de facto partners as a result of a 'domestic altercation' do not always kill under similar circumstances. For example, in one incident the female offender, who had repeatedly been sexually assaulted by her partner and was assaulted on the day of the incident, resorted to lethal violence and killed her partner (case no. 167/04). In another incident, a male offender stabbed his children, allegedly because his ex-partner was seeking money for child support (case no. 210/04). While there may be masked differences underlying the category 'domestic altercation', for classification purposes the common factor is that an argument of a domestic nature precipitated the homicide, and/or there is a general deterioration of the relationship.

The most commonly identified motive (the alleged causal factor that precedes and often leads to the events in which the final outcome is the death of the victim or victims) ascribed to male homicide victims was some type of argument or altercation involving alcohol, drugs or money or other reason (51%). In these types of homicides, the death of the victim was the outcome of an argument between two or more persons which rapidly escalated to violence. The homicides typically involve young men in public settings who use violence as a form of social control (see Polk 1994; Innes 2003). For a further 18 per cent of homicides involving a male victim, the motive was unclear, while revenge for a probable wrongdoing accounted for 15 per cent of homicides with male victims.

In comparison, the events leading to female victimisation differed greatly. During 2003–04, the majority of female victims (49%) were killed as a result of a domestic altercation (which includes arguments that arise based on jealousy, separation or termination of a relationship, and other domestic arguments that may relate to infidelity, children and custody issues, alcohol-fuelled domestic altercations and other issues between intimate or past-intimate partners). Many of these homicides are not committed in ‘cold blood’, but are rather ‘hot-blooded’ episodes occurring in ‘emotionally charged’ circumstances (Innes 2003: 4). A further 27 per cent of female victims died in circumstances where there was no apparent motive, while 10 per cent died as a result of an argument fuelled by alcohol or over money or drugs.

While it may be assumed that the best interests of the victim are inconsequential to the offender, especially at the time of the offence, in some cases offenders have taken it upon themselves to kill another person on ‘compassionate grounds’. This is particularly in homicide cases where the motive is euthanasia, a subject of much controversy and public debate. There was one such case recorded during 2003–04.

Weapons/methods

The weapons/methods used in the commission of homicide have remained relatively unchanged over the years. The most common types of weapons used in homicide in Australia are weapons of opportunity, such as hands and/or feet, and knives. Apart from a couple of years in the early 1990s where assaultive force (hands and/or feet) was the predominate method used, a knife or sharp instrument is the most common type of weapon used to kill in Australia, accounting for 32 per cent of homicide victims in 2003–04. The use of hands/feet (assaultive force) is the second most common method, with 22 per cent of victims beaten to death. Fewer than one in four (17%) victims were killed with a firearm in 2003–04. These patterns tend to differ based on the gender of the victim (Mouzos 2002a, 2003b). While males are more likely to be killed with a knife or sharp instrument (39%), followed by a firearm (21%), females are more likely to be beaten to death with hands and/or feet (32%), followed by a knife or sharp instrument (26%). A similar proportion of both males and females were killed with a blunt instrument (13% respectively).

In 2002–03, a total of 53 victims were killed with a firearm in Australia. In the most current year, the same number of victims was killed with a firearm (n=53; 17%). Another consistent pattern is that the firearms used are not legally held; that is, they are not registered to either the victim or the offender, nor is the victim or the offender licensed to own the firearm. During 2003–04, 46 identified

offenders¹¹ used a firearm to commit homicide. Of these, two used a registered firearm (4%) while five were licensed to own a firearm (11%), reflecting a decrease from the proportion of offenders licensed and registered in 2002–03 (16 per cent licensed and 14 per cent registered). Two victims were killed with a firearm that was licensed to them, and one victim was killed with a firearm that was registered to them. Handguns accounted for over half of all firearms used to commit homicide (n=28; 53%). None of the handguns used in the homicides were registered to either the victim or offender. There was only one offender licensed to own a handgun. Nine handgun homicides were unsolved at the time of data collection.

A further examination of firearms homicides suggests that they are quite different from homicide in general. Almost two out of four firearms homicides involved the murder of more than one victim (17%). While half of the firearms homicides occurred in a residential location, a quarter took place on a street or open area. Almost two-thirds of solved firearms homicides involved a male victim and offender (65%). There was only one firearm homicide where both offender and victim were female. A quarter of the solved firearms homicides occurred between strangers, and 35 per cent occurred between friends and acquaintances. Given the low level of legal ownership of firearms amongst those involved in homicide, it is not surprising that 68 per cent of offenders had a prior criminal history, compared with 49 per cent of victims.

Homicide offenders

In total there were 310 offenders identified in Australia for 2003–04 who were involved in the 249 solved homicide incidents.¹² The majority of offenders were male (87%, n=268), who offended at a rate of 2.7 per 100,000. This is about seven times the offending rate of females, which was 0.4 per 100,000. Such gender disparities are consistent with the findings from the NHMP over the past 15 years and with international homicide research (Mouzos 2000, 2002a, 2003b; Mouzos & Segrave 2004; Polk 1994; Silverman & Kennedy 1993; Flowers 2002).

Demographics

During 2003–04, homicide offenders were slightly younger than their victims. The mean age of offenders was 31 years compared with a mean age of 35 years for victims. The mean age of female offenders was 32 years, compared with the mean age of 31 years for male offenders. The youngest offender recorded in 2003–04 was aged 12 years and the oldest offender was 85 years. In terms of the age range of offenders, males have a longer offending career – they are likely to begin offending earlier than females (the youngest male was 12 years; the youngest female was 16 years) and to cease offending later than female offenders (the oldest male was 85 years, the oldest female was 57 years). The rate of offending for males peaked in the early to mid-twenties, with 20–24-year-old males offending at a rate of 7.4 per 100,000 males. Between the ages of 15

¹¹ The licensing and registration details of two offenders were not unavailable. Sixteen firearms homicides were unsolved at the time of data collection.

¹² Of the 288 homicide incidents that occurred during 2003–04, 39 were unsolved, meaning that no offender had been identified at the time of data collection.

and 49, the rate of offending ranges between 2.6 and 7.4 per 100,000 males. For female offenders the patterns are quite different. The highest rate of homicide offending for females was for those aged 30 to 34 years (1.3 per 100,000 Australian females), followed by women aged 20 to 24 years (1.0 per 100,000). Similar to findings in previous years, the highest rate of female offending occurs at a slightly older age than for males, although female offending is distributed across a smaller range of age groups.

The social context of most homicides suggests that they are likely to occur between persons who are generally from similar backgrounds and socioeconomic groups (Polk 1994). In terms of racial appearance,¹³ the majority of homicide offenders were of Caucasian appearance (65%). Similar proportions of males (66%) and females (64%) were of Caucasian appearance. As noted in previous years, the level of Indigenous offending has remained stable at the national level over the past few years (17%). The majority of Indigenous offenders were recorded in the Northern Territory (n=15), followed by New South Wales (n=14) and Queensland (n=10). As a proportion of offenders within each jurisdiction, however, offenders of Indigenous appearance accounted for the greatest proportion of offenders in the Northern Territory (83% of all offenders). While the distribution of offenders according to ethnicity is similar to the distribution of victims, there are some important shifts to note, particularly when considering racial appearance by the gender of the offender. A greater proportion of Indigenous women committed homicide compared with men (24% compared with 16%) a finding that is consistent with previous years, although the disparity was much greater for 2002–03. While there were only 10 Indigenous female offenders compared with 42 Indigenous male offenders, the proportion of female Indigenous offenders represents a quarter of the total female offending population. Indigenous women account for approximately two per cent of the total female population in Australia (ABS 2002).

The majority of homicide offenders during 2003–04 were single at the time of the incident (56%), but the distribution of homicide offenders according to marital status differed according to the gender of the offender, similar to the distribution of victims according to marital status. While the majority of male offenders were unmarried (60%), female offenders were more likely to be married or in a de facto relationship at the time the offence occurred (61%). Compared with previous years, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of single women engaging in homicide, and a decrease in the proportion of women in relationships committing homicide.

In terms of the employment status of offenders, the majority of offenders were unemployed at the time of the offence (66%). Male offenders are almost three times as likely as female offenders to be employed at the time of the offence, with 37 per cent of males being employed compared with 14 per cent of females (although the employment status of 11 per cent of women was recorded as domestic duties at the time of the offence which, as noted, is categorised as unemployed).

¹³ It is important to note that as with the racial appearance of homicide victims, the data do not accurately reflect the ethnicity of the offenders. Rather, it is an indication of racial appearance based on the subjective judgment of police and thus interpretations from any findings must be made with caution.

Precipitating factors

Of those homicide offenders arrested and charged for incidents committed during 2003–04, fewer than half of the offenders (47%) had consumed either alcohol (32%), illicit or prescription drugs (7%) or both (9%) at the time of the incident. While a greater proportion of male offenders than female offenders had consumed alcohol prior to the homicide (33% versus 22%), a higher proportion of females had consumed both alcohol and illicit/prescription drugs than males (17% versus 8%). These findings are similar to those reported for victims, and in accord with research on drug use by police detainees (Milner, Mouzos & Makkai 2004). Results of drug testing of police detainees indicate that those detained for a violent offence tested positive to a range of drugs, including methylamphetamine (24%), cannabis (57%), heroin (9%) or benzodiazepines (23%). Over two-thirds of these detainees tested positive to any drug (69%) (Milner, Mouzos & Makkai 2004). It is important to keep in mind that NHMP data are indicative only of whether the offender had consumed alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drugs prior to the incident. They are not necessarily indicative of the offender's state of mind, nor can drug use be identified as a causal factor in the homicide incident, particularly as there is no accurate measure of the amount of any substance that had been consumed by the offender (toxicology reports are not available for the offender).

Of the 310 known offenders during 2003–04, 14 (11 males and three females) committed suicide prior to or following arrest (5%). Sixty-nine per cent of male offenders and 32 per cent of female offenders had a prior criminal history, a higher proportion than male and female victims. In 13 per cent of homicides either the victim or the offender had a prior history of domestic violence. There were seven homicides where the victim or the offender, or both, had a current or expired legal intervention order.

Relationship between the victim and offender

A key factor in better understanding the contextual dynamics of the homicide event is the identification of the relational distance between the offender and the victim. The relationship between the victim and the offender provides salient information on the social dynamics that link the offender and the victim and the social context within which the homicide occurs. It also contributes important knowledge about incident patterns and potential risk markers for homicide in Australia and can guide the development of targeted prevention policies and initiatives.

Previous NHMP research has indicated that the proportion of homicides involving friends or acquaintances increased during the late 1990s. In 2001–02, the proportion of homicides between friends and acquaintances began to decline and continued to decline in 2002–03, accounting for 31 per cent of homicides. In 2003–04, 34 per cent of homicides occurred between friends and acquaintances. Intimate partner homicides accounted for a further 23 per cent, followed by 17 per cent for family homicides. There has been a decrease in family homicides, from 21 per cent in 2002–03 to 17 per cent in 2003–04.

In contrast, compared with 2002–03, there has been an increase in stranger homicides from 19 per cent to 23 per cent in 2003–04. A jurisdictional comparison reveals that while in many states the patterns reflect the findings at the national level, there was some variation. Specifically, in Western Australia two out of five homicides involved intimate partners, whereas almost a third of homicides in Victoria involved no prior relationship between victim and offender.

Earlier in the report the decline in victimisation in New South Wales was highlighted. Comparing the years 2002–03 and 2003–04 in relation to the relationship between victim and offender reveals that in New South Wales there have been some slight changes in the composition of homicides in the current year. Intimate partner homicides have remained relatively stable (22% in 2002–03 and 20% in 2003–04), whereas family homicides have apparently increased from eight per cent to 23 per cent. However, a longer-term comparison indicates that usually just over one in five homicides in NSW occurs between family members, with the year 2002–03 being an anomaly. All other types of homicides have declined: homicides between friends and acquaintances decreased from 40 per cent to 36 per cent, stranger homicides decreased from 21 per cent to 19 per cent and homicides involving other relationships decreased from nine per cent to one per cent.

Analysing victim–offender relationships based on the gender of the offender reveals the disparate circumstances in which males and females are most likely to be offenders or victims of homicide. During 2003–04, male offenders were most likely to kill a friend or acquaintance (37%) and male victims were most likely to be killed by a friend or acquaintance (42%). In comparison, women were most likely to kill those closest to them (81%), with 38 per cent of female offenders killing intimates and 43 per cent killing family members. This pattern is consistent with previous years (Mouzos 2003b; Mouzos & Segrave 2004). Likewise, women are most likely to be killed by an intimate partner (52%) or a family member (23%). Men are far more likely to kill (27%) or be killed (31%) by a person unknown to them than female offenders or victims – only two per cent of female offenders killed a stranger while seven per cent of female victims were killed by a stranger.

Homicidal encounters

Homicide does not occur in a vacuum. There are many factors that come into play to increase the likelihood that a homicide will occur. The following section is new to the NHMP annual report, and examines in greater detail the circumstances and characteristics of some of the homicidal encounters that occurred during 2003–04.

Intimate partner homicide

A total of 71 intimate partner homicides occurred during 2003–04, the majority of which involved a male killing his female partner. Previous research has identified that both men and women living in de facto relationships are at a greater risk of intimate partner homicide than married couples (see Mouzos & Shackelford 2004; Shackelford & Mouzos forthcoming). Almost half of the intimate partner homicides in 2003–04 occurred between current or separated de facto partners.

Given the private nature of intimate partner homicides, over three-quarters occurred in residential locations. Only 14 intimate partner homicides occurred in a street or open area/waterway. This finding illustrates the particular difficulty that policy-makers and law enforcers are faced with when trying to devise strategies to address violence within the home.

Considering the characteristics of intimate partner homicide, the data show that over half of the intimate partner homicides committed by a male offender involved the killing of a partner who was younger than the offender. As expected, the opposite pattern was observed when females killed their partners, with the overwhelming majority of females killing an older male partner (81%). Of the 71 intimate partner homicides, 17 (or 24%) involved either an Indigenous victim or offender or both an Indigenous victim and offender. Most of the Indigenous intimate partner homicides also involved either the victim or the offender or both being under the influence of alcohol (76% or n=13). Thirty-three per cent of non-Indigenous intimate partner homicides involved the consumption of alcohol.

Much previous research has observed that a history of domestic violence is common in intimate partner homicides, and that in some cases the homicide incident is the culmination of numerous prior incidents of domestic violence (Goetting 1995; Jurik & Winn 1990; Mouzos 2003b, 2003c; Browne 1997; Arias & Pape 1999). A prior history of domestic violence was recorded in 31 out of the 71 intimate partner homicides (44%). In six intimate partner homicides, a current or expired legal intervention order was also in place. Given the differences between men and women in terms of physical strength, it is not surprising to find that only five per cent of the male intimate partners were beaten to death compared with 35 per cent of females. In contrast, male victims were more likely to be killed with a knife or sharp instrument (63%) by their female partners.

Child homicide

There is probably no crime that attracts more public condemnation and media attention than the murder of a child. As already outlined in this report, 34 children under the age of 15 years were killed, and there was also the death of an unborn baby. Twelve of the 34 child homicides involved the deaths of infants aged less than 12 months. There was little difference in the gender distribution of the victims: 16 of the 34 children were male and the remaining 18 victims were female. Eight of the 34 child homicides involved either an Indigenous victim and offender, or a non-Indigenous victim and Indigenous offender.

Seventy per cent of the child homicides were committed by a family member, usually a parent (21 out of 34). Twelve homicides involved the mother killing her child. There were only two child homicides committed by strangers. This is relatively small despite public fears that children are most in danger of being abducted and murdered. There were two child homicides that occurred during the course of another crime (sexual assault). Both involved an offender who was known to the victim: a family member and a close friend of the family, respectively. There were no unsolved child homicides.

Nine out of 10 child homicides occurred in a residential location (89%), with four children killed in an open area/waterway. In relation to the type of weapon/method used in the child homicides, the data indicate that 10 of the 34 children were killed with a knife or sharp instrument, followed by hands or feet (n=9) or some other method (n=9). There was one child killed with a firearm during 2003–04.

Homicide between persons known to each other

Most homicides in Australia occur between persons who are known to each other. Over one-third of homicides in 2003–04 involved a falling out between friends or acquaintances or persons in other relationships, such business associates, neighbours or employees/employers. The majority of these homicides involved male-on-male confrontations (81%; n=95). There were only two homicides between females who were known to each other. A further 15 homicides involved males killing their female friends or acquaintances. Over half of the homicides involved an offender killing a victim who was younger than them.

Half of these homicides occurred at a residential location (50%), with a further third occurring in a street or open area/waterway (35%). Fridays and Saturdays were the days when these homicides usually occurred. A total of 17 homicides in this category occurred during the course of other crime, with the majority stemming from property-type offences (76%; n=13). The case study below is an example of a homicide that falls within this category:

Three offenders broke into the victim's home to steal his drugs. They also thought that the victim was a paedophile. They bashed the victim to death and stole his drugs. All three offenders had taken methylamphetamine prior to the incident (case no. 213/04).

Arguments and altercations are common motives for homicides between known persons. They occur for a variety of reasons, including over money or drugs (19%), seeking revenge for a perceived wrongdoing (22%) or consumption of alcohol (10%). About 60 per cent of homicides between known persons involved either the victim, the offender or both under the influence of alcohol *prior* to the incident. Gang involvement was indicated in a total of 11 homicides.

Many of these confrontational or conflict-resolution homicides between known persons involved the use of a knife or sharp instrument (44%), or a blunt instrument (18%). A further 16 per cent involved the use of assaultive force (hands and/or feet), such as in the case study above. Firearms were used in 14 per cent of these homicides.

Stranger homicide

The last category of homicides to be examined are those that involve persons with little or no prior knowledge of each other. There was a total of 73 stranger homicides committed in Australia during 2003–04. The overwhelming majority involved males as both victims (90%) and offenders (99%). There was only one female offender involved in killing a person not known to her. Strangers are also more likely to kill a person who is older than them (70%). Sixty-one per cent of offenders were

aged between 18 and 34 years, compared with 41 per cent of victims. A further 16 per cent ($n=12$) of victims killed by strangers were aged 65 years or older. There were no stranger homicides that involved an Indigenous victim and offender. This finding is not surprising given that previous research examining differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous homicides found that very few Indigenous homicides occur between persons not known to each other (see Mouzos 2001). This is especially the case in contract killings (see Mouzos & Venditto 2003).

Compared with the previous types of homicidal encounters examined where the majority of homicides occurred in a residential location, less than a quarter of stranger homicides in 2003–04 occurred in a residential location (23%). Almost half of the stranger homicides took place on the street or an open area/waterway (48%). A further 12 per cent of stranger homicides occurred at a recreational venue, such as a pub, bar or nightclub. This would explain why 31 per cent of the stranger homicides involved both the victim and offender drinking alcohol prior to the homicide incident.

In terms of the motive for stranger homicides, 30 per cent of deaths resulted from an argument or altercation. A further 23 per cent were in relation to money or drugs. This includes acquiring money for drugs. Over a quarter of the stranger homicides ($n=20$; 27%) occurred during the course of another crime, usually a robbery (eight out of 20) or a break and enter (four out of 20) or theft (five out of 20). Seventy-two per cent ($n=52$) occurred during the late evening or early morning, and usually on a Friday or Saturday. The use of assaultive force (hands and/or feet) or firearms were the most common weapons employed by strangers to enact homicide (29% and 22% respectively). Knives or sharp instruments and blunt instruments were used in a similar proportion of stranger homicides (15% each).

Conclusion

The results from the analysis of the 2003–04 data indicate the multifaceted nature of homicide and the need to conceptualise homicide as more than simply a violent act that results in the (often unintentional) unlawful death of one or more persons. Rather, there is usually a series of events or triggers that leads to this tragic outcome. This report has highlighted the circumstances and characteristics of homicides that occurred during 2003–04, with specific reference to identifying the patterns that have changed over time.

The data presented in the report facilitate comparisons across jurisdictions, as they have been collected using a consistent methodology. This also allows for comparisons across time, and most importantly allows for trends to be tracked and to respond in a timely manner to issues as they arise. The results in this report also highlight areas that intervention and prevention strategies can target. For example, in relation to intimate partner homicide, a number of police services in Australia are focusing on ways in which domestic homicides can be reduced by looking on non-lethal events. Some have even adopted a pro-arrest strategy for incidents of domestic violence. Further reducing the number of incidents of homicide in Australia is a possibility, but it requires a concerted effort and a commitment to understanding and identifying where resources could be employed and the areas that could be targeted. The AIC, through its NHMP and dissemination of data, is one of the many agencies involved in making Australia a safer place.

Data usage

Homicide data can be used for a variety of purposes. For example, aggregated data at the state level provides police and policy-makers with an indication of the level of lethal violence in their jurisdiction, and access to longitudinal patterns in lethal violence. Specifically, the data may be utilised to identify shifts in victimisation or offender trends, or changes in the patterns of the circumstances and characteristics of homicide incidents (such as an increase in offences occurring during the course of another crime).

At the Australian Government level, NHMP data can be used to monitor the effect of legislative reforms, such as the National firearms agreement and subsequent changes over time in the use of firearms, as well as in the types of firearms used to commit homicide. Data from the NHMP provide important guidance in the development of policy and strategic directions in diverse fields such as community services, policing, mental health, courts and correctional institutions. In recent years NHMP data have also been used as expert evidence in murder trials (see text box below), as well as persuasive argument for the prosecution in an appeal matter.

A function of the NHMP is to communicate the most current data and recent results to key stakeholders, governments at the local, state and federal level, non-government organisations, research agencies and the general public. Within the AIC a number of other monitoring programs

Probative value of NHMP data – *R v Dupas* [2004] VSC 253 (21 July 2004)

During 2004, NHMP data were used by prosecutors in the case *R v Dupas* [2004] VSC 253 (21 July 2004) to support their submission that the removal of a breast or breasts from deceased women is an unusual feature of homicide. The submission was based on a report provided to the Victoria Police Homicide Squad. The police had requested a manual review of all homicides that occurred between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 2000 to determine whether there had been any previous homicides which involved a female having her breasts cut off.

Defence counsel argued that the report based on the NHMP lacked any probative value. His Honour, Justice Kaye held:

I do not accept that submission. In my view, the evidence of Dr Mouzos does have probative value. The National homicide monitoring program statistics to be adduced by her cover a period of over one decade, and are nationwide. The question of what weight the evidence ought to be accorded is a matter for the jury, but I do not find that it lacks any or any sufficient relevance or probative value. On the contrary, the evidence is clearly relevant to establish that the excision of a breast of a deceased woman, after her murder, is either unique or extremely rare in Australia over a period of almost one decade... That evidence is relevant to support the Crown proposition that the removal of a breast or breasts from a deceased woman after her homicide is a rare and unusual feature.

The offender was found guilty of murder and imprisoned for the rest of his natural life and without the opportunity for release on parole.

The value of NHMP annual reports to state and territory police services

As the Commander of the NSW Police Homicide Squad, I read with great interest each annual report. As the state where approximately one-third of all Australian homicides occur, it is helpful in addressing concerns raised in the media, by the police executive and by government by permitting us to quote facts in our responses. Criteria such as solve rates, weapons used, the involvement of drugs and alcohol in murders generates discussion in terms of how we compare to other states and whether there is more we can do with regard to prevention. We wonder whether our focus on alcohol crime and legislation on carrying knives has resulted in a slowing of the murder rates in recent times. Working with facts rather than fantasy makes our work easier and the NHMP provides that for us.

– Detective Superintendent Paul Jones, Homicide Squad, NSW Police

The NHMP annual reports provide our office with the basis for providing reasoned advice in relation to operational decision-making in certain circumstances. They also assist in reaching informed positions or views on matters of policy and issues concerning legislative reform in homicide and related areas.

– Detective Inspector John Venditto, Major Crime Investigation Branch, SA Police

Victoria Police Homicide Squad has found the NHMP publication very useful, particularly when comparing trends in Victoria to other jurisdictions. The publication will also be a good reference for the current Boston Consulting Group review of the Victoria Police management of major crime model. We look forward to ongoing cooperation during the year ahead.

– Detective Inspector Bernie Rankin, Homicide Squad, Vic Police

The document is particularly useful when considering emerging trends that may impact on the strategic direction of the State Homicide Investigation Group. I have found the causal factors of murder also provide a guide for identifying initiatives to reduce the offences at divisional levels in particular when dealing with domestic homicide.

– Detective Inspector Mike Condon, State Homicide Investigation Group, Qld Police

perform similar roles, including the Drug use monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program, the National deaths in custody monitoring program, and more recently, the National armed robbery monitoring program (NARMP) (Borzycki, Sakurai & Mouzos 2005). Requests for NHMP data since its inception have increased steadily. As such, the data set has become an essential resource drawn upon by a wide range of stakeholders. An indication of the ever-expanding audience to whom NHMP data has been communicated through publications and presentations, is given through the examples of the data usage for this reporting year outlined below.

Published material: 2003–2004

(see <http://www.aic.gov.au/research/projects/0001-docs.html>)

Homicide in Australia: 2002–2003 National homicide monitoring program (NHMP) annual report. Research and public policy series no 55. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, 2004, Jenny Mouzos and Marie Segrave

A comparative, cross-national analysis of partner-killing by women in cohabiting and marital relationships in Australia and the United States. *Aggressive behaviour* 30(3): 206–216, 2004, Jenny Mouzos and Todd K Shackelford

Contract killings: a suburban phenomenon. *Blueprint* issue 5, March 2004, Jenny Mouzos and John Venditto

Linking data to practice in homicide/violence prevention. In V Pottie Bunge, CR Block & M Lane (eds) *Linking data to practice in homicide and violence prevention: proceedings of the 2004 homicide research working annual symposium* Orlando: Homicide Research Working Group, 2004, Jenny Mouzos

Merging research and practice: an examination of contract killings in Australia. In V Pottie Bunge, CR Block & M Lane (eds) *Linking data to practice in homicide and violence prevention: proceedings of the 2004 homicide research working annual symposium*, Orlando: Homicide Research Working Group, 2004, Jenny Mouzos and John Venditto

Women's experiences of lethal and non-lethal violence in Australia. In V Pottie Bunge, CR Block & M Lane (eds) *Linking data to practice in homicide and violence prevention: proceedings of the 2004 homicide research working annual symposium*, Orlando: Homicide Research Working Group, 2004, Jenny Mouzos

Presentations

The lethal and non-lethal nature of violence in Australia: findings from the International violence against women survey and the National homicide monitoring program. Washington DC: National Institute of Justice, 7 June 2004, Jenny Mouzos

Linking data to practice in homicide/violence prevention: the Australian experience. Homicide research working group (HRWG) annual symposium, Ann Arbor Michigan, 3–5 June 2004, Jenny Mouzos

Merging research and practice: an examination of contract killings in Australia. Homicide research working group (HRWG) annual symposium, Ann Arbor Michigan, 3–5 June 2004, Jenny Mouzos and John Venditto

Women's experiences of lethal and non-lethal violence: research in progress. Homicide research working group (HRWG) annual symposium, Ann Arbor Michigan, 3–5 June 2004, Jenny Mouzos

The nature of violence in Australia: an overview of AIC research. Ottawa: Justice Canada, 11 June 2004, Jenny Mouzos

Examples of agencies and organisations that have requested data

- Homicide squads/major crime units in all Australian states and territories
- Australian Crime Commission (ACC)
- Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- New South Wales Attorney-General's Department
- Department of the Parliamentary Library
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)
- Department of Justice, Victoria
- Mental Health Unit, Queensland Health
- NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre
- Department of Criminology, University of Melbourne
- Law School, University of Sydney
- La Trobe University
- RMIT University
- Newcastle University
- Reader's Digest (Australia)
- The Age
- Who Weekly
- Women's Weekly
- marie claire (Australia)
- Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics
- University of Southern Maine, USA
- William Pompe Institute for Criminal Law and Criminology, Netherlands
- Australian Government, Attorney-General's Department
- Australian Customs Service (ACS)
- New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
- Productivity Commission
- Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission
- Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Strategic Planning and Population Health Division, SA Dept of Human Services
- Members of the House of Representatives
- James Nash House, South Australia
- NSW Ombudsman
- Queen Sofia Centre for the Study of Violence, Spain
- University of New South Wales
- Monash University
- University of Western Australia
- ABC Stateline and Radio National
- Network Ten, Sydney
- The Australian
- Reuters Australia
- B Magazine
- The Bulletin
- National Institute of Health, USA
- Queer Nation, NZ

Methodological note

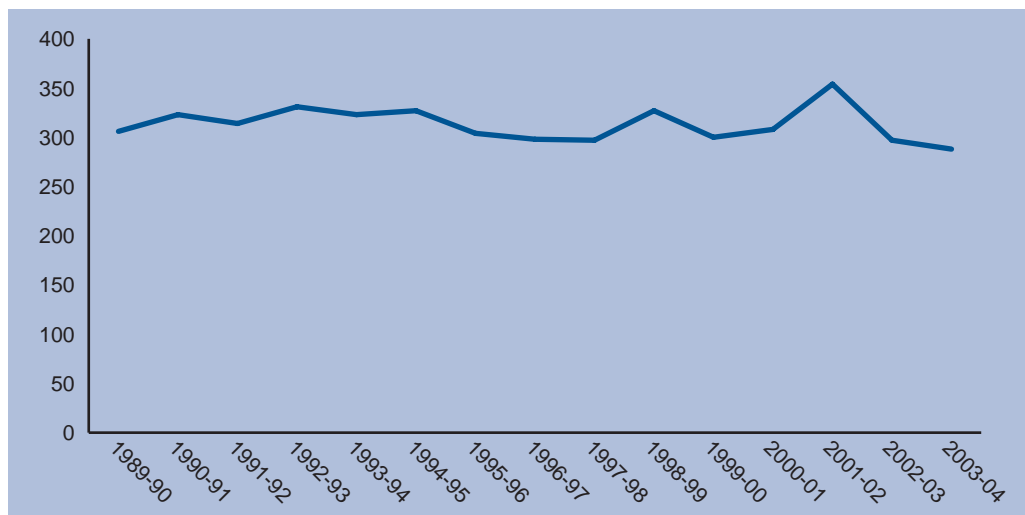
Where rates are presented in the tables that follow (victimisation and offending rates), they have been calculated using the mid-year population for the fiscal year 2003–2004, that is, the *Estimated resident population for states and territories as at December 2003* (ABS 2003). Similarly, rates for age and gender (victimisation and offending) have been calculated using the *Estimated resident population by sex and age, states and territories of Australia, June 2001* (ABS 2003). Some column percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

NHMP 2003–2004 findings



INCIDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Trends in homicide incidents

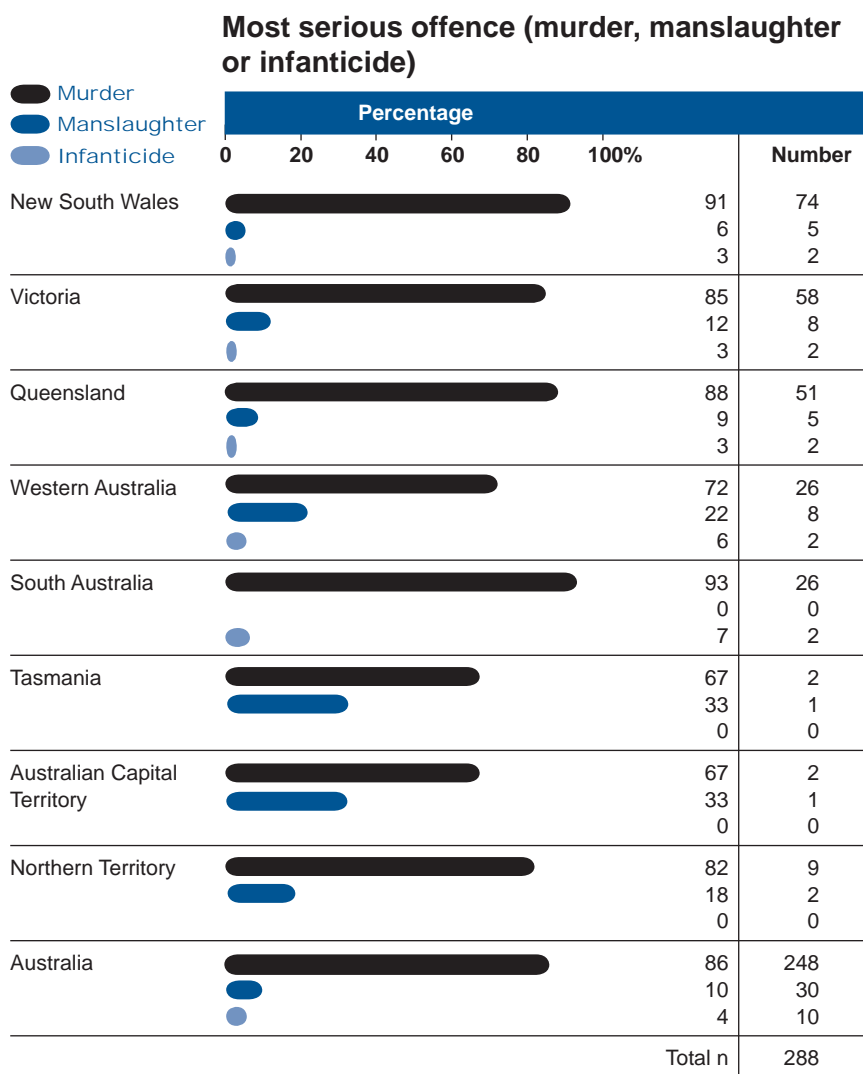


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 1989–1990 to 2003–2004 [computer file]

Incidence of homicide

	Percentage			Number
	0	20	40	
New South Wales	<div></div>		28	81
Victoria	<div></div>		24	68
Queensland	<div></div>		20	58
Western Australia	<div></div>		13	36
South Australia	<div></div>		10	28
Tasmania	<div></div>		1	3
Australian Capital Territory	<div></div>		1	3
Northern Territory	<div></div>		4	11
Australia	<div></div>		100	288

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

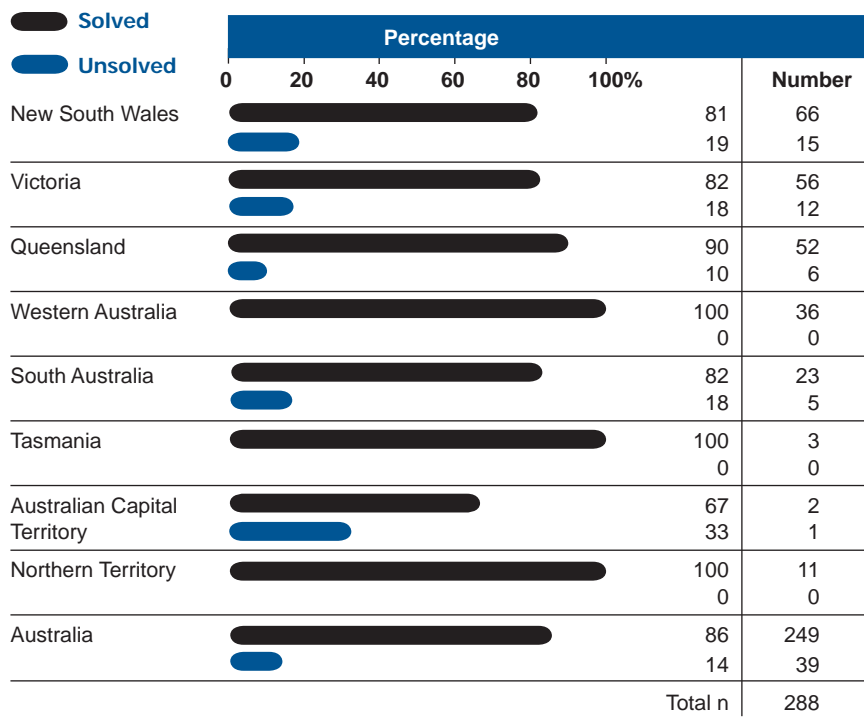
Incidents with single versus multiple victims/offenders

	Percentage	Number
One victim, one offender	82	204
One victim, multiple offenders	14	34
Multiple victims, one offender	4	10
Multiple victims, multiple offenders	<1	1
Total incidents n (a)	100	249

(a) Excludes 39 cases where an offender has not been identified

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Incidents solved*



* Solved incidents include those where an offender has been identified and charged, and incidents where the offender has suicided

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of incidents by number of victims

	Total n	One victim	Two victims	Three victims
New South Wales	81	96	2	1
Victoria	68	93	7	0
Queensland	58	93	5	2
Western Australia	36	94	6	0
South Australia	28	100	0	0
Tasmania	3	100	0	0
Australian Capital Territory	3	100	0	0
Northern Territory	11	91	9	0
Australia	288	95	4	1

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of incidents by number of offenders*

	Total n	Single offender	Two offenders	Three offenders	Four or more offenders
New South Wales	66	86	9	3	2
Victoria	56	89	7	2	2
Queensland	52	90	0	6	4
Western Australia	36	94	6	0	0
South Australia	23	61	30	0	9
Tasmania	3	67	0	33	0
Australian Capital Territory	2	100	0	0	0
Northern Territory	11	73	18	0	9
Australia	249	86	8	3	3

* Excludes 39 cases where an offender has not been identified

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of homicide incidents by time of day

	Total n	Midnight to 6am	6am to noon	Noon to 6pm	6pm to midnight
New South Wales	76	26	14	28	32
Victoria	65	29	11	22	38
Queensland	51	25	18	16	41
Western Australia	29	28	10	14	48
South Australia	25	40	16	12	32
Tasmania	3	33	0	33	33
Australian Capital Territory	3	33	33	0	33
Northern Territory	11	27	0	18	55
Australia (a)	263	29	13	20	38

(a) Excludes 25 cases where the exact time of the day the incident occurred was unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of homicide incidents by day of week

	Total n	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
New South Wales	80	14	14	13	10	14	19	18
Victoria	66	14	12	11	15	20	9	20
Queensland	57	14	5	11	12	18	25	16
Western Australia	35	6	20	14	17	11	17	14
South Australia	27	7	15	19	11	11	19	19
Tasmania	3	0	0	33	33	0	0	33
Australian Capital Territory	3	0	33	0	0	0	33	33
Northern Territory	11	0	18	9	9	18	9	36
Australia (a)	282	11	13	12	13	15	17	18

(a) Excludes six incidents where the exact day that the incident occurred was unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Homicide incidents by month of the year

	Percentage	Number
January	12	33
February	6	18
March	5	15
April	8	23
May	9	25
June	6	18
July	7	20
August	12	35
September	11	31
October	8	23
November	9	25
December	7	20
Total (a)	100	286

(a) Excludes two incidents where the exact date of the incident was unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of homicide incidents by location

	Total n	Residential premise	Street/ open area	Other location (a)
New South Wales	80	50	33	18
Victoria	68	51	43	6
Queensland	57	70	14	16
Western Australia	35	60	23	17
South Australia	27	63	26	11
Tasmania	3	67	33	0
Australian Capital Territory	3	33	33	33
Northern Territory	11	64	36	0
Australia (b)	284	57	30	13

(a) Includes shops, shopping malls, banks/credit unions/post offices, car parks/public garages/service stations, workplaces, other commercial premises, public transport and related facilities, places of entertainment, and corrective/health institutions

(b) Excludes four incidents where location details were unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Incidents that occurred during the course of another crime

	Percentage	Number
New South Wales	24	19
Victoria	6	4
Queensland	16	9
Western Australia	3	1
South Australia	7	2
Tasmania	67	2
Australian Capital Territory	67	2
Northern Territory	0	0
Australia (a)	14	39

(a) Excludes two incidents where occurrence during the course of another crime could not be determined

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Incidents that occurred in the course of another crime by type of crime

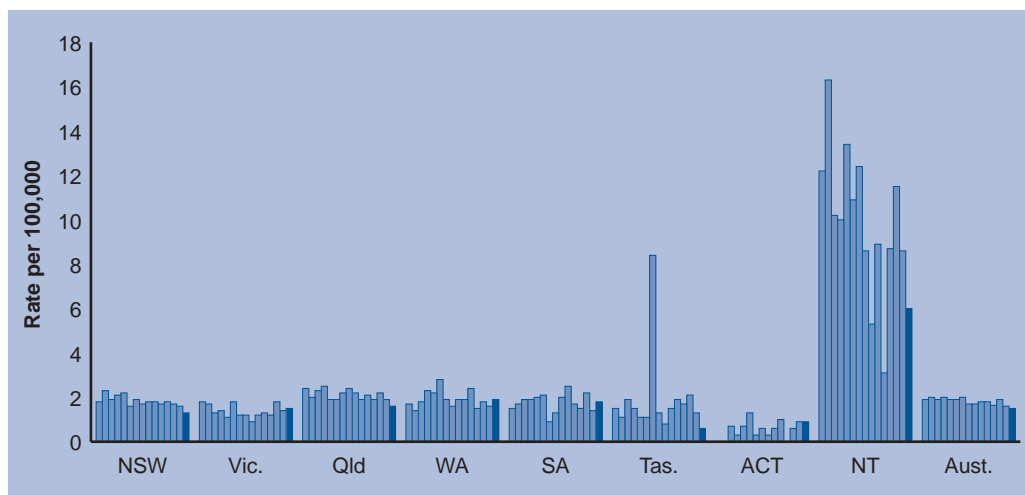
	Percentage	Number
Sexual assault	23	9
Kidnapping/abduction	3	1
Robbery	31	12
Other violent crime	3	1
Arson	3	1
Break and enter	13	5
Theft	18	7
Prostitution	3	1
Other	5	2
Total	100	39

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS

Trends in homicide victimisation, 1989–2004



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 1989–1990 to 2003–2004 [computer file]

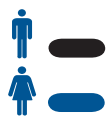
Age of victims

	Males (a)		Females		Persons	
	Total n	Mean age	Total n	Mean age	Total n	Mean age
New South Wales	57	35	28	31	85	34
Victoria	45	38	28	44	73	40
Queensland	42	36	21	29	63	33
Western Australia	18	29	18	27	37	27
South Australia	20	33	8	37	28	34
Tasmania	2	69	1	29	3	56
Australian Capital Territory	2	50	1	45	3	48
Northern Territory	8	36	4	35	12	36
Australia (b)	194	36	109	34	304	35

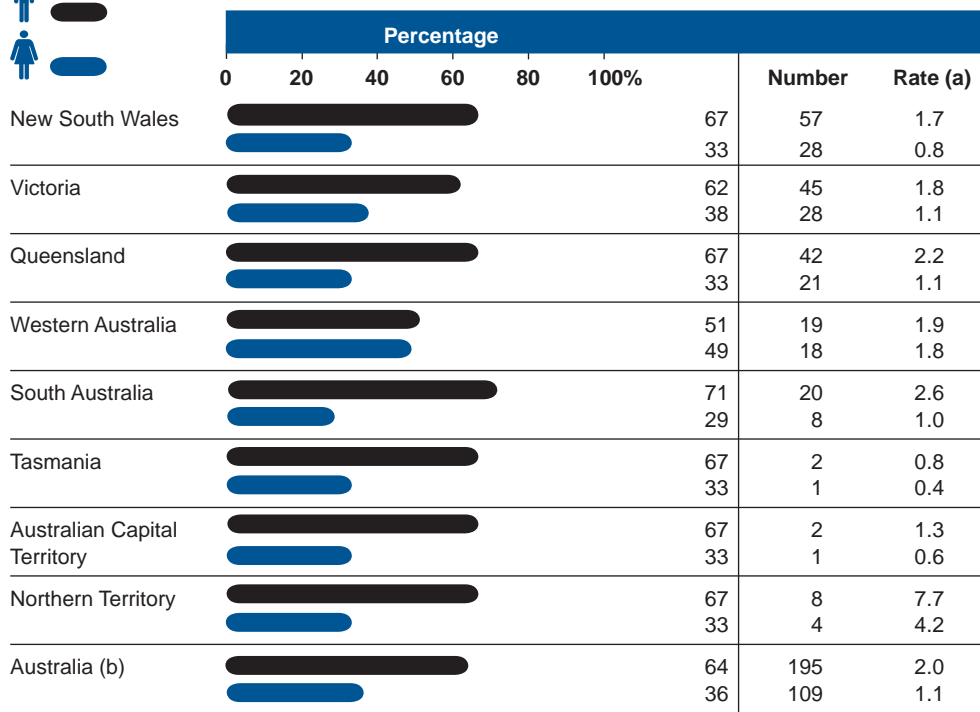
(a) Excludes one victim where age was not stated

(b) Excludes one victim where gender was not stated

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



Gender of victims

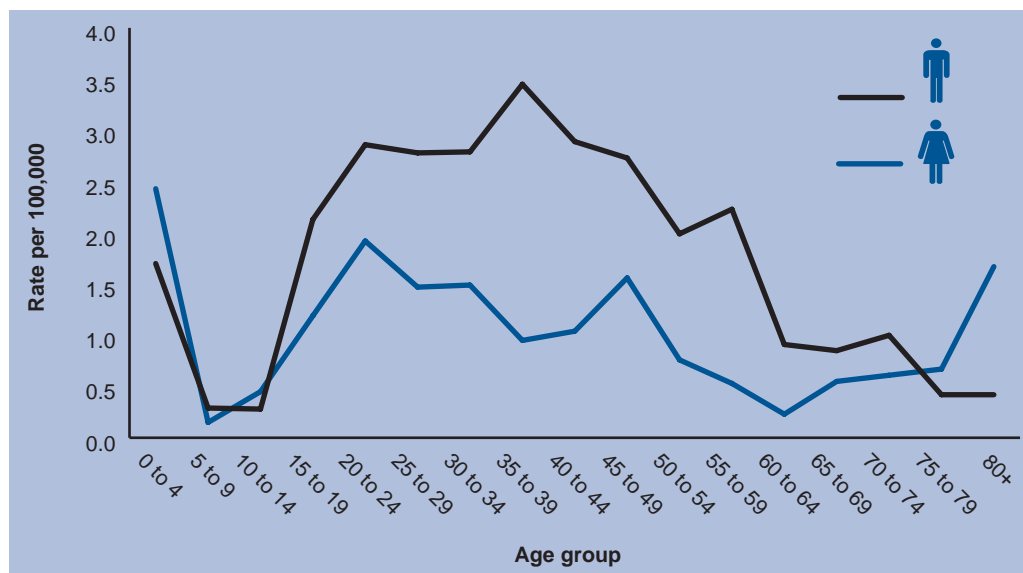


(a) Rate per 100,000 population

(b) Excludes one victim in Western Australia whose gender was unknown (unborn baby)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Homicide victimisation by age* and gender**



* Excludes one victim whose age was not stated

** Excludes one victim whose gender was not stated

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Homicide victimisation, by age and gender

	Males		Females		Persons (a)	
	Number	Rate (b)	Number	Rate (b)	Number	Rate (b)
0 to 4	11	1.7	15	2.4	26	2.1
5 to 9	2	0.3	1	0.2	3	0.2
10 to 14	2	0.3	3	0.4	5	0.4
15 to 19	15	2.1	8	1.2	23	1.7
20 to 24	20	2.9	13	1.9	33	2.4
25 to 29	19	2.8	10	1.5	29	2.1
30 to 34	21	2.8	11	1.5	32	2.1
35 to 39	25	3.5	7	1.0	32	2.2
40 to 44	22	2.9	8	1.0	30	2.0
45 to 49	19	2.7	11	1.6	30	2.1
50 to 54	13	2.0	5	0.8	18	1.4
55 to 59	13	2.2	3	0.5	16	1.4
60 to 64	4	0.9	1	0.2	5	0.6
65 to 69	3	0.8	2	0.5	5	0.7
70 to 74	3	1.0	2	0.6	5	0.8
75 to 79	1	0.4	2	0.7	3	0.6
80+	1	1.4	7	1.7	8	1.2

(a) Excludes one victim where age was not stated and one victim where gender was not stated

(b) Rate per 100,000

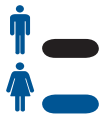
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Victims by marital status*

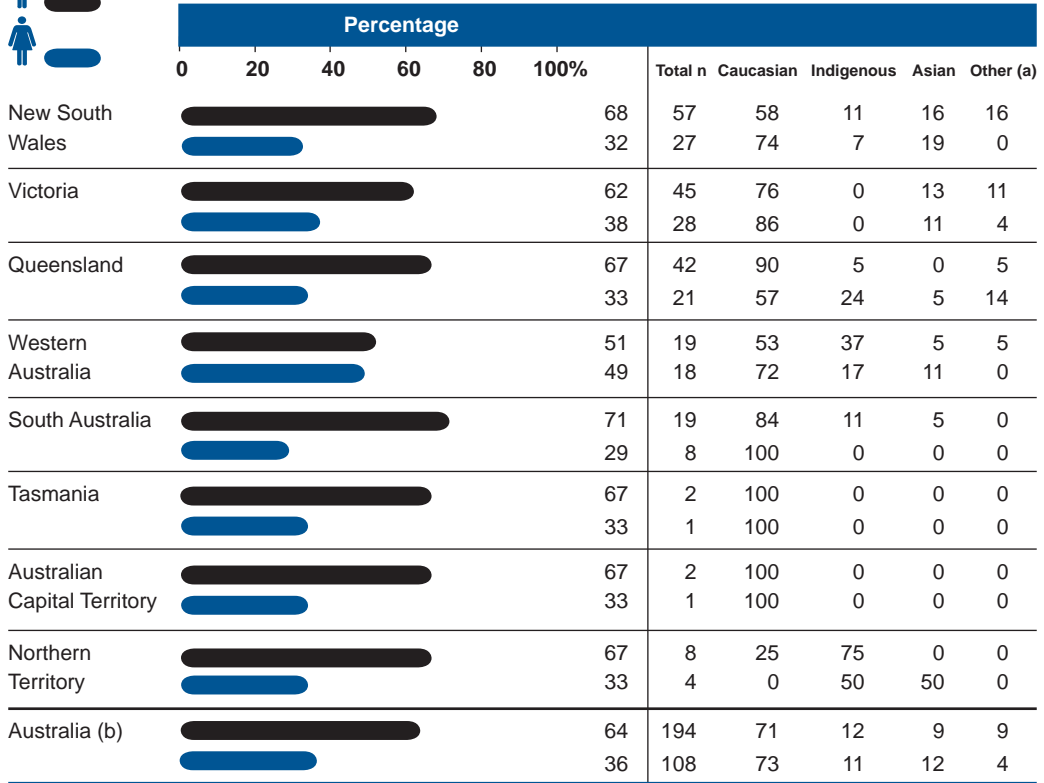
	Never married		Married/de facto		Separated/divorced		Widowed	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
New South Wales	45	43	51	33	4	14	0	10
Victoria	50	20	39	48	11	12	0	20
Queensland	71	19	21	50	4	31	4	0
Western Australia	45	40	45	40	9	20	0	0
South Australia	39	0	22	33	39	33	0	33
Tasmania	50	0	0	0	50	100	0	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	50	0	50	100	0	0
Northern Territory	50	25	50	50	0	25	0	0
Australia	50	27	38	42	11	21	1	10

* Excludes 35 victims aged less than 15 years and 17 victims for whom marital status information was unavailable

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



Victims by racial appearance



(a) Includes Maori/Pacific Islander and other

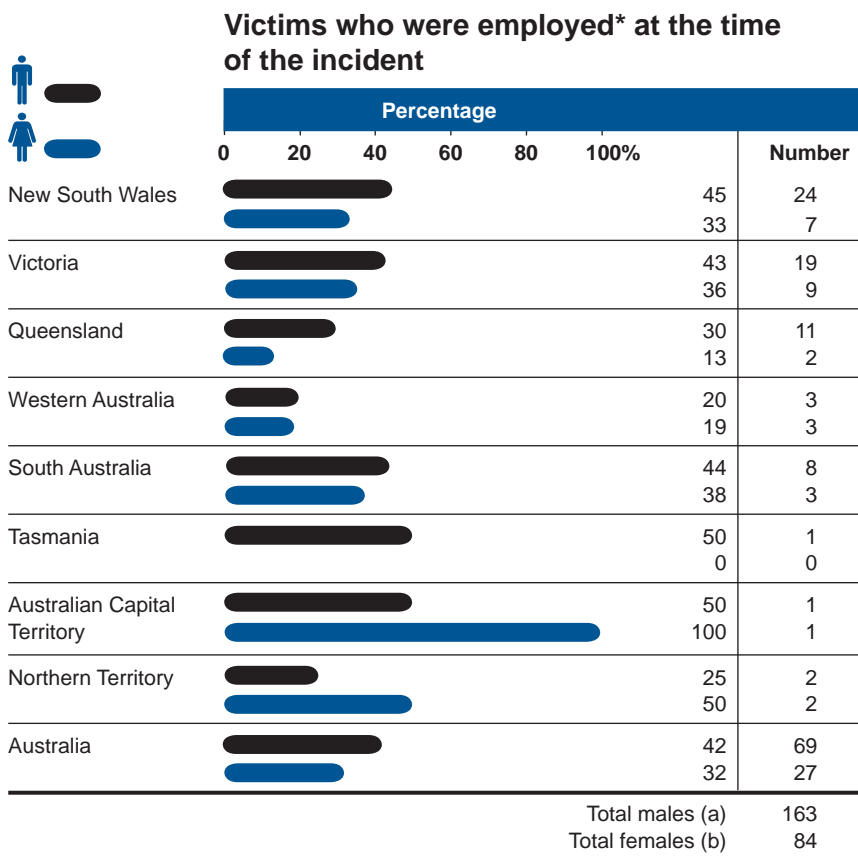
(b) Excludes three victims where racial appearance was not stated

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Victims with a prior criminal history

	Percentage	Number
Males	58	114
Females	22	24
Persons	45	138

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



* Defined as full or part-time employment

(a) Excludes 16 victims aged less than 15 years, 15 victims where employment status information was not available, and one victim who was in prison

(b) Excludes 19 victims aged less than 15 years, and six victims where employment status information was not available

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Victims killed by a mentally disordered offender*

	Percentage	Number
Yes	7	22
No	93	283

* This refers to cases where it was believed that the offender suffered from a mental disorder immediately before or at the time of the incident, where noted in police documents (which may not be comprehensive)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of victims by alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drug use

	Alcohol only		Illicit/prescription drugs only		Alcohol and illicit/prescription drugs		No alcohol/drug use	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
New South Wales	31	25	4	14	13	0	53	61
Victoria	29	11	11	21	29	21	31	46
Queensland	26	26	7	0	14	0	52	74
Western Australia	58	17	0	11	5	6	37	67
South Australia	16	14	0	14	5	0	79	71
Tasmania	0	0	0	0	50	100	50	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	0	100	50	0	50	0
Northern Territory	63	50	0	0	25	0	13	50
Australia	31	20	5	13	17	8	47	59
Total n (a)	60	21	10	14	32	8	90	63

(a) Excludes six victims (three males and three females) where alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drug use information is not yet available, and one victim whose gender was unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]; National Coronial Information System (NCIS)

Number of victims by cause of death

	Gunshot wound	Stab wound	Beating	Strangulation/suffocation	Other (a)	Unknown
New South Wales	24	23	20	12	5	1
Victoria	16	25	16	7	8	1
Queensland	7	23	22	7	1	3
Western Australia	2	11	9	7	6	3
South Australia	3	6	13	1	4	1
Tasmania	1	0	0	1	1	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	1	0	2	0	0
Northern Territory	0	9	1	0	2	0
Australia (n)	53	98	81	37	27	9
Australia (%)	17	32	27	12	9	3

(a) Includes drug overdose, drowning/submersion, neglect, smoke inhalation/burns, shaking, and being pushed from a high place

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of victims by cause of death

	Gunshot wound		Stab wound		Beating		Strangulation/suffocation		Other (a)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
New South Wales	32	22	32	19	28	15	4	37	5	7
Victoria	27	14	39	29	20	25	5	18	9	14
Queensland	10	15	40	35	38	35	10	15	3	0
Western Australia	6	6	44	19	28	25	0	38	22	13
South Australia	16	0	26	13	47	50	0	13	11	25
Tasmania	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	50	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	50	0	0	0	50	100	0	0
Northern Territory	0	0	100	25	0	25	0	0	0	50
Australia	21	13	38	24	28	26	5	26	8	11
Total n (b)	39	14	73	25	54	27	9	27	15	12

(a) Includes drug overdose, drowning/submersion, neglect, smoke inhalation/burns, shaking, other

(b) Excludes five male victims and four female victims where cause of death was unknown, and one victim whose gender was unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Number of victims by type of weapon

	Firearm	Knife/sharp instrument	Blunt instrument	Hands/feet	Other (a)	Unknown/no weapon
New South Wales	24	23	8	19	9	2
Victoria	16	25	8	16	6	2
Queensland	7	23	11	13	6	3
Western Australia	2	12	2	9	8	5
South Australia	3	6	8	8	2	1
Tasmania	1	0	0	1	1	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	1	0	1	0	1
Northern Territory	0	9	0	1	0	2
Australia (n)	53	99	37	68	32	16
Australia (%)	17	32	12	22	10	5

(a) Includes explosives, fire, poison, drugs, vehicles and other weapons

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of victims by type of weapon

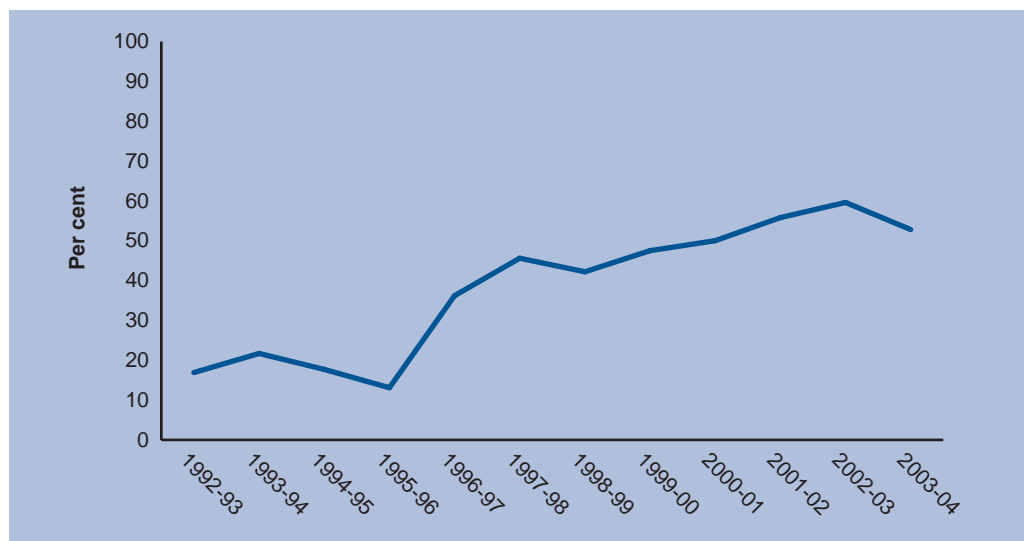
	Firearm		Knife/sharp instrument		Blunt instrument		Hands/feet		Other (a)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
New South Wales	32	23	32	19	12	4	21	27	4	27
Victoria	27	15	39	30	9	15	16	33	9	7
Queensland	10	15	40	35	18	20	23	20	10	10
Western Australia	6	6	50	25	0	13	13	38	31	19
South Australia	16	0	26	13	32	25	21	50	5	13
Tasmania	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	50	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	50	0	0	0	50	0	0	0
Northern Territory	0	0	100	50	0	0	0	50	0	0
Australia	21	14	39	26	13	13	19	32	9	15
Total n (b)	39	14	73	26	24	13	35	32	17	15

(a) Includes explosives, fire, poison, drugs, vehicles and other weapons

(b) Excludes 16 victims (seven males and nine females) where type of weapon used was unknown, and one victim where gender was unknown

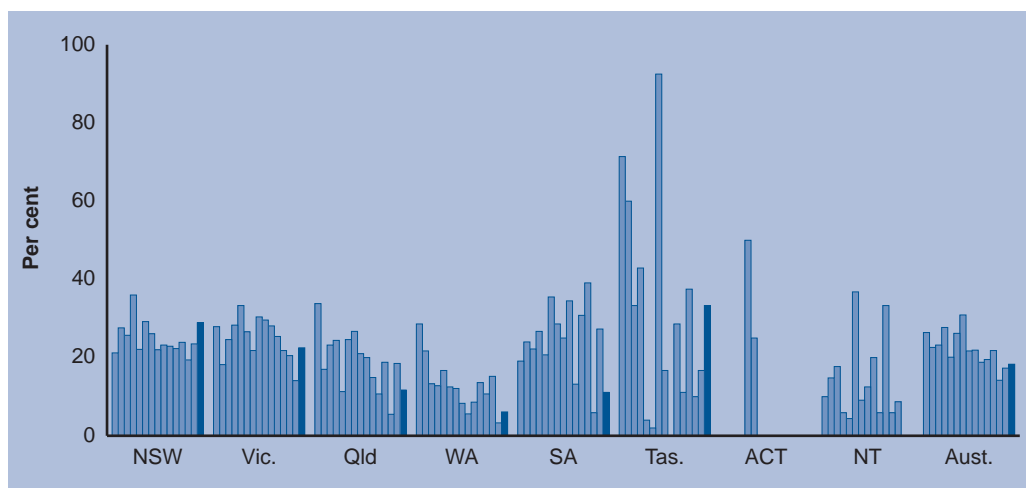
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Handgun homicides as a percentage of firearm homicides



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 1992–1993 to 2003–2004 [computer file]

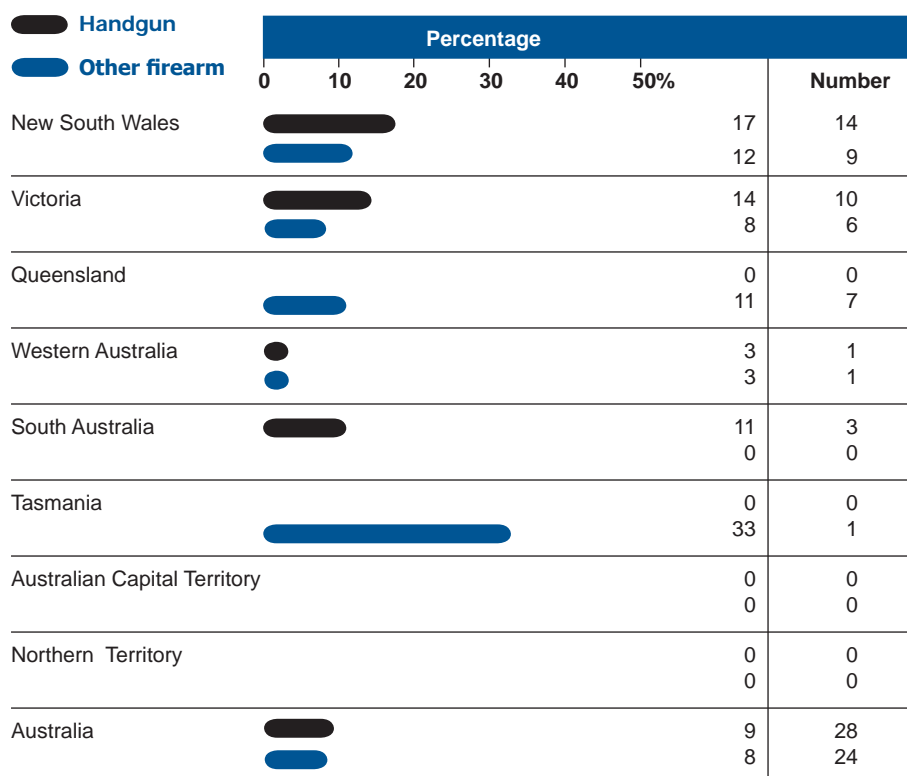
Trends in firearm homicides, percentage of all weapons,* 1989–2004



* Figures exclude cases where weapon type was unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 1989–1990 to 2003–2004 [computer file]

Victims killed with a handgun or other firearm*



* Other firearm excludes one victim where the firearm was unidentified

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Licence and registration status of firearms used in homicide

	Victims (n=53)		Offenders (n=46)			
	Licensed	Registered	Licensed	Registered	Unlicensed	Unregistered
New South Wales	1	0	1	1	19	19
Victoria	0	0	3	0	9	12
Queensland	0	0	1	1	4	4
Western Australia	0	0	0	0	2	2
South Australia	0	0	0	0	4	4
Tasmania	1	1	0	0	3	3
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Territory	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	2	1	5	2	41	44
Total %	4	2	11	4	89	96

* Excludes two offenders whose licensing and registration details were not known

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of victims by alleged motive

		Revenge	Domestic (a)	Money/ drugs	Alcohol- related argument	Other argument	Other motive (b)	No apparent motive (c)
New South Wales	Males	14	18	19	12	26	2	9
	Females	7	36	18	11	4	7	18
Victoria	Males	22	13	13	7	22	2	20
	Females	7	39	0	0	21	0	32
Queensland	Males	10	12	14	19	24	0	21
	Females	0	67	5	0	5	0	24
Western Australia	Males	16	16	5	21	16	0	26
	Females	6	50	11	0	6	0	28
South Australia	Males	10	15	25	5	25	0	20
	Females	0	75	0	0	0	0	25
Tasmania	Males	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
	Females	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
Australian Capital Territory	Males	0	0	0	50	50	0	0
	Females	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Northern Territory	Males	25	25	13	25	0	0	13
	Females	0	50	0	0	0	0	50
Australia (d)	Males	15	15	15	13	23	1	18
	Females	5	49	7	3	8	2	27
Total n	Males	29	29	30	26	44	2	35
	Females	5	53	8	3	9	2	29

(a) Domestic includes jealousy, desertion/termination of a relationship and other domestic altercation

(b) Other motive includes racial/sexual vilification (hate crimes), sexual gratification, envy and other motives

(c) Where motive for the homicide is yet to be determined/is unknown

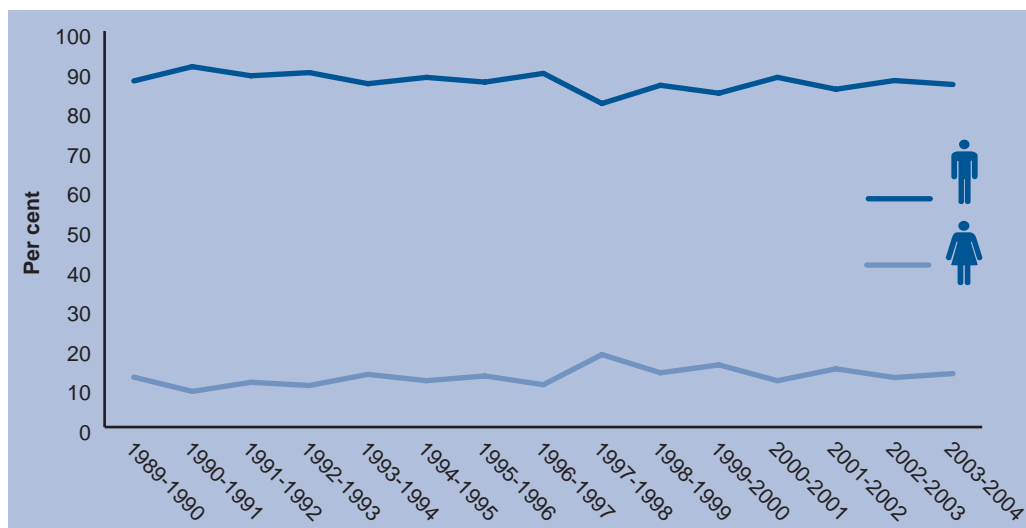
(d) Excludes one victim whose gender was not known

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

Trends in homicide offending



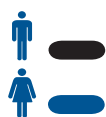
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 1989–1990 to 2003–2004 [computer file]

Age of offenders

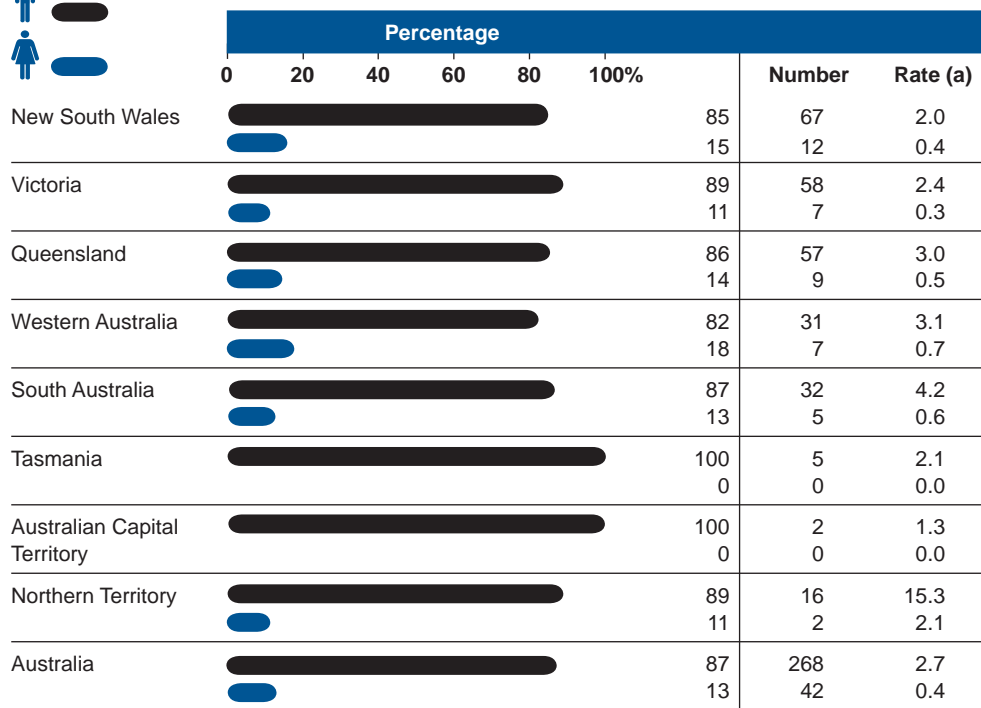
	Males		Females		Persons	
	Total n	Mean age	Total n	Mean age	Total n	Mean age
New South Wales	67	31	12	33	79	31
Victoria	58	30	7	43	65	32
Queensland	57	32	9	25	66	31
Western Australia	30	34	7	29	37	33
South Australia	32	29	5	36	37	30
Tasmania	5	28	0	0	5	28
Australian Capital Territory	2	26	0	0	2	26
Northern Territory	16	27	2	26	18	27
Australia (a)	267	31	42	32	309	31

(a) Excludes one offender whose age was not stated

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



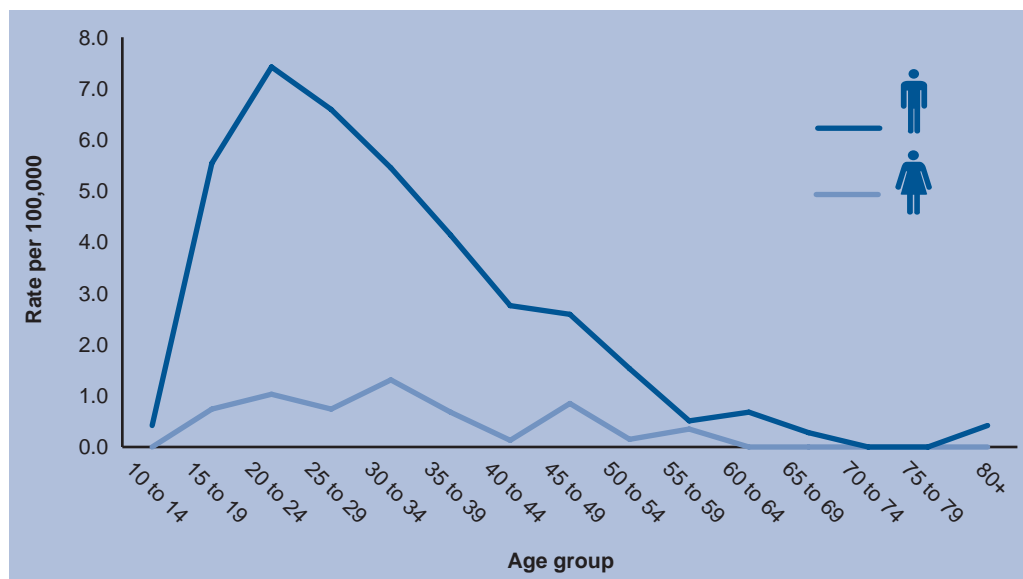
Gender of offenders



(a) Rate per 100,000 population

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Homicide offending by age* and gender



* Excludes one offender whose age was not stated

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Homicide offending, by age and gender

	Males		Females		Persons (a)	
	Number	Rate (b)	Number	Rate (b)	Number	Rate (b)
10 to 14	3	0.4	0	0.0	3	0.2
15 to 19	39	5.5	5	0.7	44	3.2
20 to 24	52	7.4	7	1.0	59	4.3
25 to 29	45	6.6	5	0.7	50	3.7
30 to 34	41	5.5	10	1.3	51	3.4
35 to 39	30	4.1	5	0.7	35	2.4
40 to 44	21	2.8	1	0.1	22	1.4
45 to 49	18	2.6	6	0.9	24	1.7
50 to 54	10	1.5	1	0.2	11	0.8
55 to 59	3	0.5	2	0.4	5	0.4
60 to 64	3	0.7	0	0.0	3	0.3
65 to 69	1	0.3	0	0.0	1	0.1
70 to 74	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
75 to 79	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
80+	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.2

(a) Excludes one offender whose age was not stated

(b) Rate per 100,000

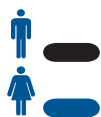
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Offenders by marital status*

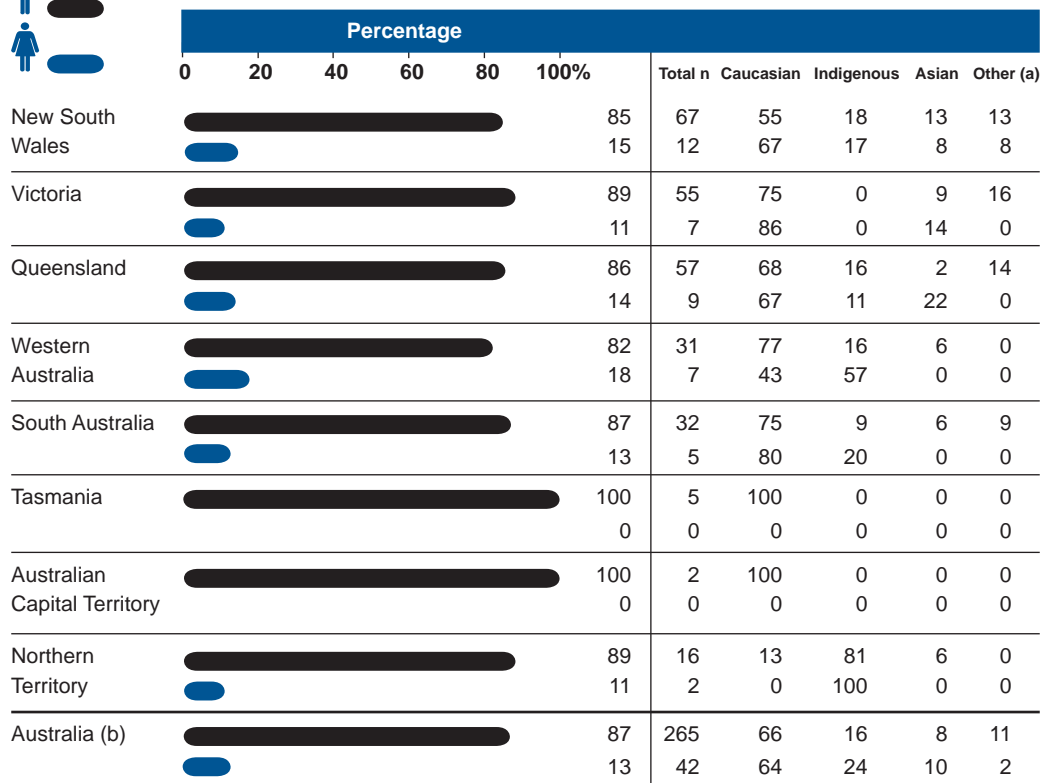
	Never married		Married/ de facto		Separated/ divorced	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
New South Wales	67	27	27	64	6	9
Victoria	62	29	35	57	4	14
Queensland	41	25	45	63	14	13
Western Australia	60	60	24	40	16	0
South Australia	71	0	19	80	10	20
Tasmania	40	0	40	0	20	0
Australian Capital Territory	50	0	0	0	50	0
Northern Territory	63	50	38	50	0	0
Australia	60	29	31	61	9	11

* Excludes three offenders aged less than 15 years, and 23 male and four female offenders for whom marital status information was unavailable

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



Offenders by racial appearance



(a) Includes Maori/Pacific Islander and other

(b) Excludes three offenders whose racial appearance was not stated

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Offenders with a prior criminal history

	Percentage	Number
Males	69	174
Females	32	13
Persons (a)	64	187

(a) Excludes 16 offenders (15 male and one female) where criminal history information was unavailable

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



* Defined as full or part-time employment

(a) Excludes 26 offenders where employment status information was not available, and three offenders who were under 15 years of age

(b) Excludes seven offenders where employment status information was not available

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Offenders who committed suicide prior to or following arrest

	Percentage	Number
Males	4	11
Females	7	3
Persons	5	14

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Percentage of offenders by alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drug use

	Alcohol only		Illicit/prescription drugs only		Alcohol and illicit/prescription drugs		No alcohol/drug use	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
New South Wales	32	33	9	8	5	8	54	50
Victoria	19	14	4	0	13	29	64	57
Queensland	31	11	11	22	11	0	46	67
Western Australia	24	43	0	0	0	29	76	29
South Australia	41	0	4	0	7	0	48	100
Tasmania	80	0	0	0	0	0	20	0
Australian Capital Territory	50	0	0	0	0	0	50	0
Northern Territory	75	0	13	0	6	100	6	0
Australia	33	22	7	7	8	17	53	54
Total n (a)	83	9	17	3	19	7	132	22

(a) Excludes 17 male offenders and one female offender where alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drug use information is not known

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

Prior domestic violence history*

	Percentage	Number
Prior history	11	33
Legal intervention	2	7
No history	86	268
Not stated	1	2

* This refers to incidents where either the victim or offender had a prior history of domestic violence

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

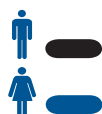
Relationship between victim and offender, percentage

	N	Intimates	Family	Friends/acquaintances	Strangers	Other (a)
New South Wales	74	20	23	36	19	1
Victoria	68	19	12	32	31	6
Queensland	70	24	19	34	20	3
Western Australia	39	41	13	31	15	0
South Australia	37	16	19	22	32	11
Tasmania	5	20	0	0	80	0
Australian Capital Territory	2	0	0	50	50	0
Northern Territory	18	17	11	67	6	0
Australia (b)	313	23	17	34	23	4

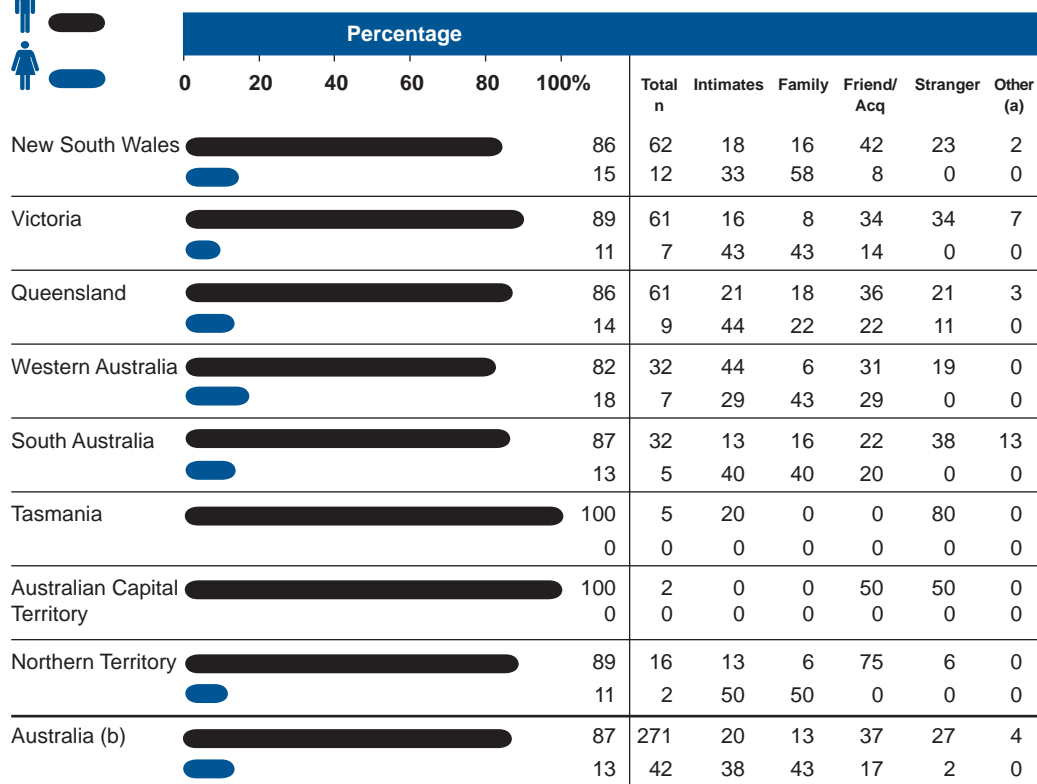
(a) Includes business associates, tour guide/tourists, employee/employer, boarding house manager/boarder and colleagues

(b) Excludes nine cases where the relationship between the offender and victim is unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]



Relationship between victim and offender, percentage by gender of offender



(a) Includes business associates, tour guide/tourists, employee/employer, boarding house manager/boarder and colleagues

(b) Excludes nine cases where the relationship between the offender and the victim is unknown

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NHMP 2003–2004 [computer file]

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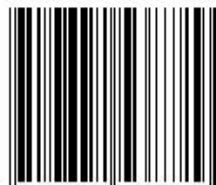
Australian Institute of Criminology

Research and Public Policy Series

No. 66

This report presents tabulated information on the circumstances and characteristics of homicide in Australia for the fiscal year 2003/04. In addition, the report contains jurisdictional breakdowns for comparative purposes and some long-term trend data across the fifteen-year NHMP data collection period. In 2003-2004, there was a total of 288 incidents of homicide recorded. These were committed by 310 homicide offenders and resulted in the deaths of 305 victims. This is a slight decrease compared with the previous year.

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