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**Abstract** | The relationship between the consumption of alcohol and a range of violent crimes, including homicide, is overwhelmingly acknowledged by criminologists. Less is known about the specifics of this relationship—in particular, whether the worst alcohol-related violence occurs in private, or in public settings such as Australia’s expanding night-time leisure areas.

This study finds no evidence of a substantial concentration of homicides in specific night-time leisure areas. Homicides are, however, both directly and indirectly related to the night-time economy, with indirectly related incidents outweighing others. This finding affirms the need to persist with strategies to limit intoxication associated with night-time leisure, and further explore ways to control the sale of and access to alcohol in the general community.

## Homicide and the night-time economy

Stephen Tomsen and Jason Payne

Violence perpetrated by intoxicated persons in night-time leisure environments across Australia has recently become a major concern for police, media and the public (Tomsen 2010). At the same time, there have been divided reactions to the expanded provision and consumption of a range of public, social night-time activities involving collective eating, drinking and other forms of commercial entertainment (Roberts 2006; Talbot 2007). Planning strategies aimed at creating vibrant night centres that are attractive and accessible to all members of the community have been implemented across Australia (Stevenson 2003). Yet the positive image of the ‘24-hour city’ often diverges from empirical reality, as the concentration of licensed venues and alcohol consumption in leisure zones contrasts sharply with notions of sociocultural diversity and public safety (Tomsen 2014).

This study comprises a unique analysis of Australian homicides and offers new information about the locations and prevalence of, and trends in, killings related to alcohol use and the night-time economy (NTE). Case records from the Australian National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) database for two sample years (1998–99 and 2007–08) were analysed and the reliability of police classification of incidents as alcohol related was checked by a researcher. The study compares the patterns and characteristics of 73 homicides directly or indirectly related to the night-time economy, and gives examples of typical incident scenarios.

In recent decades, there has been a research and official focus on night-time leisure and its links with types and levels of violence and crime (Winlow & Hall 2006; Hadfield 2009). In the United Kingdom, deindustrialisation, the rapid deregulation of the liquor industry and the rise of a poorly regulated private security sector (with high levels of bouncer violence and illegal activity in pubs and clubs) all contributed to a startling rise in problematic commercial night-time leisure in many towns and cities (Hobbs et al. 2002; Finney 2004; Roberts 2006). The notion of the 24-hour city became the focal point of discussions around a monoculture of determined late-night intoxication (Measham & Brain, 2005) that appears to be associated with crime, violence and disorder in contemporary post-industrial cities. These concerns have been echoed in recent Australian debates about night-time disorder, late licensing hours, assaults in listed venues, the regulation and behaviour of nightclub security providers and the possible infiltration or targeting of these by criminal gangs, problems with transport and safety at special events and increased resource pressures on police and emergency/medical services at night (Chikritzhs 2009).

The general relationship between night-time leisure and crime is demonstrated by strong evidence that public disorder, vandalism, drink-driving, serious assaults and sexual assaults all peak on weekend nights, and follow the rhythms of night-time socialisation (Hadfield 2009). Research has consistently shown violence and harm in late-night entertainment areas peaks between midnight and 3 am, and occurs most frequently on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights (Chikritzhs & Stockwell 2002, Chikritzhs et al. 2007; Ireland & Thommeny 1993). Where these incidents do not occur within the clear confines of the night-time economy, they may be indirectly associated with it.

There is a direct relationship between night-time leisure drinking in and around licensed premises and the serious confrontational violence that typically, although not exclusively, occurs between young men (Homel & Tomsen 1993; Polk 1994; Tomsen 2005; Donkin & Birks 2007). A range of studies have confirmed a general link between heavy night-time intoxication and violent activity, especially within groups of young men (Teece & Williams 2000; Donnelly & Snowball 2006; Donnelly et al. 2007). Felson, Baccaglini and Gmelch (1986) note that young men—the dominant demographic group using licensed premises—are also, generally, the most violence-prone group in society. The risk of violence in a large licensed venue is therefore higher than it is elsewhere, based on both levels of alcohol consumption and patron demographics (see also Graham & Homel 2008).

It must be remembered that intoxication does not determine behaviour; the link between intoxication and violent activity is far from inevitable (Tomsen 1997). Qualitative social research has, importantly, led to later criminological and addiction studies that suggest there is no singular, fixed social response to collective drinking (Graham & Homel 1997; Graham & Homel 2008), contrary to claims that individual responses are pharmacologically determined.

These refinements to our knowledge have been vital in developing contemporary social-science accounts of alcohol-related behaviour that seek to inform regulatory and preventative measures with firm knowledge of the environmental and spatial factors that contribute to violence. Studies of the licensed environment have found that a shifting range of factors relating to the condition of each venue or site can play a significant role in inciting problematic behaviour (Homel, Tomsen & Thommeny 1991a; Homel, Tomsen & Thommeny 1991b; Homel & Tomsen 1993; Stockwell et al. 1993; Graham et al. 2000; Donnelly & Briscoe 2002; Graham & Homel 2008).

Although much of the negative publicity around the night-time economy in Australia relates to high-profile cases of homicide (including killings by bouncers and fatal one-punch attacks), studies focusing directly on the subject of homicide and the night-time economy have until recently been limited. National records show a notable long-term decline in Australian homicide rates, including a decrease in cases of confrontational killing by assault among male strangers and acquaintances (Dearden & Payne 2009). Nevertheless, this decrease has occurred amid ongoing concern about long-term increases in serious assault and violent injuries and sits uncomfortably with evidence of high levels of violence between men, particularly those who drink collectively.

## Study aims and method

This study closely analysed records of homicides related to alcohol and the night-time economy to determine whether the various preventive measures adopted across the country have been effective in minimising such incidents.

Broadly, the study aimed to:

- examine historical trends in alcohol-related homicide;
- analyse case material from the national homicide database relating to fatal violence, to better understand the specific nature of the links between homicide, alcohol and the night-time economy; and
- draw evidence from the records to determine objective measures of locational, temporal and situational risk.

Australian researchers and police agencies have been at the forefront of implementing alcohol service intervention strategies, liquor accords, outlet density restrictions and the stricter policing and regulation of specific licensed venues and private security providers, and monitoring their impacts (Doherty and Roche 2003; Homel et al. 2004; Chikritzhs et al. 2007). However, the effects of preventive measures that target night-time leisure activity with a focus on drinking and illicit drug use remain highly contentious.

Australian national homicide monitoring is comprehensive. Nevertheless, key aspects of this type of crime are not fully understood, including why the long-term decline in offences is not consistent across all settings. The study focused on specific, related patterns of homicide to draw out the full extent of and shifts in these through a close examination of archival records.

The National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) was established at the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in 1989. Information about homicide incidents, victims and offenders is provided directly to the AIC from the homicide squads of each police agency. This is then supplemented with coronial findings and autopsy and toxicology reports as they become available. This information is sourced from the National Coronial Information System (NCIS), a national database containing all cases reported to a coroner throughout Australia, managed by the Victorian Department of Justice and the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine. The database has wide coverage and holds the records of 2,963 homicides that occurred in Australia between 1997–98 and 2006–07 (Dearden & Jones 2008).

In 2011–12, an AIC research officer completed a hands-on quality assurance (QA) examination of all 587 NHMP homicide files from 1998–99 (n=327) and 2007–08 (n=260). The officer read all file documents and incident narratives closely, selecting and recording the details of 238 cases determined to be alcohol-related and classifying these as related to the night-time economy or not.

For this study, the term ‘alcohol-related homicide’ describes any homicide in which alcohol was deemed to have been a contextual or proximal factor. This was typically because the victim or offender drank alcohol in the period shortly preceding the fatal event, or because the homicide occurred on or near premises where alcohol was being sold or served. Alcohol could only be deemed a factor in those cases in which this was flagged by the police or noted in the incident narratives provided to the NHMP.

Homicides related to the night-time economy are those homicides that are connected in some way with places where alcohol is sold or served. A directly related homicide is one that occurred at or near a place of alcohol sale or service; an indirectly related homicide is one which, while not occurring at a place of alcohol sale or service, involved a connection to such a place (as indicated by the incident narrative). An example of a homicide indirectly related to the night-time economy would be an incident in which a victim was killed in a park or bushland following a physical or verbal altercation at a nearby pub.

Importantly, the analysis was limited to incidents that occurred between 6 pm and 6 am (‘night-time’). In a handful of cases, time of death was outside these hours, but the investigation and incident narrative indicated the timeframe of the incident included hours between 6 pm and 6 am. These cases were included.

In all, 73 of the homicides could reasonably be classified as related in some way to the night-time economy. Those incidents classified as directly related to the night-time economy (occurring within or near a place of alcohol service or sale) and those that were indirectly related to the night-time economy (related to alcohol consumption but occurring somewhere other than a place of alcohol service or sale) were compared. The results of this analysis are discussed below.

## Homicide in Australia: NHMP data

Homicide is a crime that evokes much public fear and political concern. Nevertheless, Australian homicide rates are in the mid-to-low range for the industrialised world, and have declined per capita over the long term. It has been suggested this decline relates to contemporary factors including gun controls, economic buoyancy and the gentrification of formerly highly violent neighbourhoods (Weatherburn 2004). It is also possible the increasing regulation and control of public drinking has been a factor in this shift.

Data from the NHMP indicates Australia’s homicide rate has fallen below 300 incidents per year since 2003–04. This is more remarkable when considered in the context of Australia’s population, as this change took place during a period of substantial population growth.

Recorded homicide rates steadily declined throughout the 20th century, with the decline becoming notable in the last two decades. During the 1990s Australia’s homicide rate was just under two incidents per 100,000 people. After 2001–02, the rate continued to drop and in recent years has

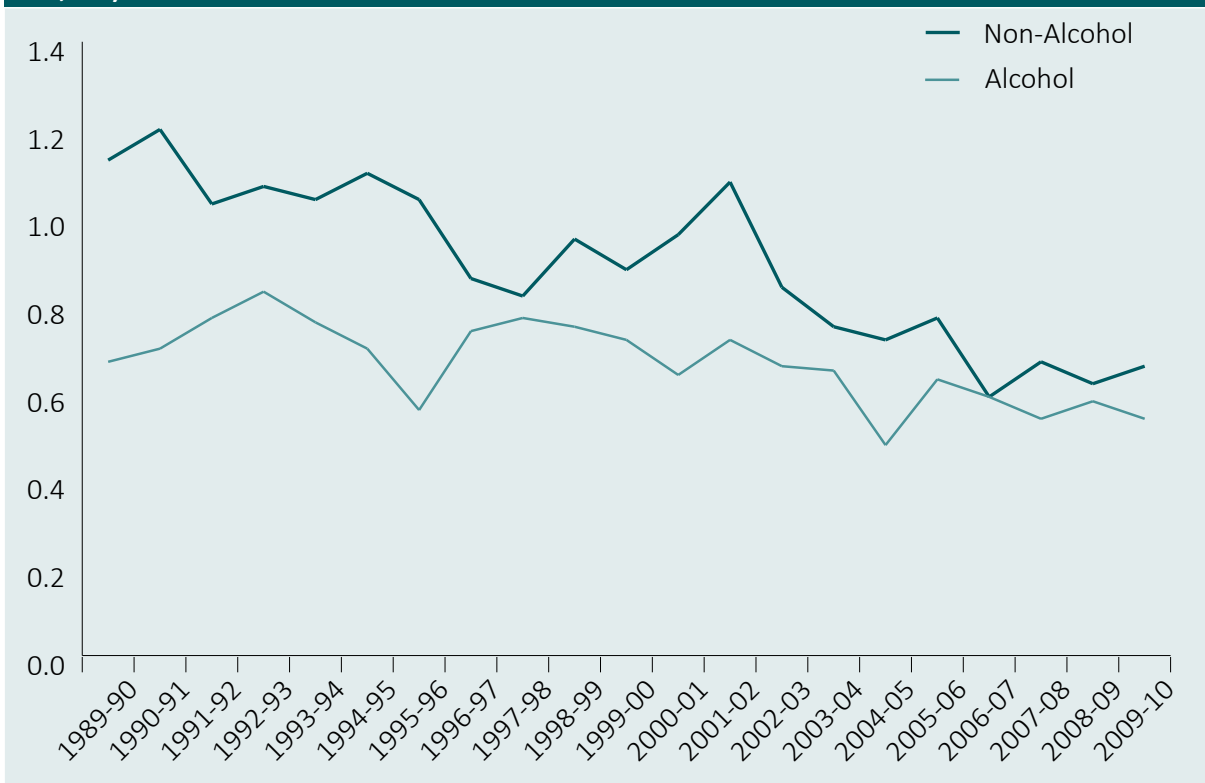
regularly been 1.2 incidents per 100,000 people. Even more recent reporting suggests the rate has fallen to 1.1 per 100,000 (Bryant & Cussen 2015).

Despite this long-term decline, alcohol is known to be a prominent factor in Australian homicides. In some years, alcohol was a factor in more than half of all homicides. NHMP data indicates a marked relationship between alcohol and homicide, usually within the 40–50 percent range.

There is evidence that alcohol-related homicides are declining at a slower rate than homicides in general. Figure 1 illustrates the different rates of decline in alcohol-related and non-alcohol-related homicides in Australia. The rate of non-alcohol-related homicides fell from 1.2 per 100,000 people to well below one per 100,000. The downward trend in alcohol-related incidents has been notably slower.

There is also uncertainty about the classification of homicides as alcohol-related in different periods. National records reflect the role of alcohol in thousands of homicides across two decades; alcohol is clearly a factor in both offending and victimisation, with 38 percent of offenders and just over 32 percent of victims classified as under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crime. From this data, it appears likely there is a strong relationship between alcohol and homicide risk factors, which is compounded in scenarios involving collective drinking, aggressive interaction and physical vulnerability.

**Figure 1: Alcohol and non-alcohol related homicide incidents, 1989–90 to 2007–08 (rate per 100,000)**



## Trends in homicide and the night-time economy, 1998–99 to 2007–08

A total of 238 NHMP records were classified by QA checking as alcohol-related (110 in 1998–99 and 128 in 2007–08), indicating alcohol was an important contextual factor in around 41 percent of all 587 incidents that occurred over the two years analysed. Similarly, NHMP data (adjusted in line with the QA checking) for the two sample years (1998–99 and 2007–08) reflect a notable rise in the proportion of alcohol-related homicides, from 34 percent to 49 percent.

On evidence, alcohol-related homicides were 34 percent (110) of all incidents (327) in 1998–99 and 49 percent (128) of all incidents (260) in 2007–08. It seems likely this increase in the percentage of incidents across a period that also saw a significant fall in total homicides reflects better police record-keeping around the role of alcohol in such incidents, as well as a real increase in the number of these cases.

This study was particularly concerned with uncovering any shift in the relationship between homicide and the night-time economy in 1998–99 and 2007–08. The number of NTE-related homicides fell from 39 to 34 in these years. However, this 13 percent decrease is notably smaller than the 30 percent decrease in Australian homicides overall between 1998–99 and 2007–08. Despite this fall in numbers, the rate of NTE-related homicides rose slightly, from 12 percent (39 of 327 incidents) to 13.5 percent (35 of 260 incidents) of all homicides in these years.

Of the total 73 homicides related to the night-time economy, 27 were directly related and 46 indirectly related. Directly related homicides fell from 14 to 13 cases (an insignificant change), but indirectly related cases fell from 25 to 21 (a potentially significant drop). These figures show the proportion of homicides directly related to the night-time economy was virtually unchanged, and the proportion of those indirectly related to the night-time economy fell, in relation to all alcohol-related homicides in the sample years.

The sex or gender and age of victims were also significant. The largest groups of victims were in their 30s and 40s. A clear majority of victims were men (71%). Men were equally likely to be killed in both directly and indirectly NTE-related homicides. However, women were notably more likely to be victims of indirectly related homicides.

The relationship between victim and offender was important. Just 19 percent of these were classified as ‘stranger’ relationships, and homicides of this kind were mostly directly related to the night-time economy. Forty percent of victim/offender relationships were classified as acquaintances, neighbours or recent acquaintances; another 18 percent were classified as intimate partner relationships. However, intimate partner relationships and ‘some other form of family’ relationships together accounted for 28 percent of the homicides, and these were overwhelmingly indirectly NTE-related.

There was a significant number of unarmed attacks, with ‘beatings’ making up the largest category of mode of killing, and the highest number of homicides directly related to the night-time economy. Beatings were closely followed in significance by stabbings, and then strangulation. The former was more common, and the latter occurred exclusively in indirectly NTE-related homicides. Death by gunshot was more likely to occur in directly NTE-related killings.

Incidents most frequently occurred between midnight and early morning (6 am) followed by early evening to midnight, and these together accounted for 78 percent of all homicides examined. These are known peak intoxication times for Australians engaged in night-time leisure (see Miller et al. 2013). Close reading of the file summaries and case narratives (see below) suggests episodes of extended night-time drinking can carry over well into the following day, but homicides arising from these are still NTE-related homicides.

There was also a very late-night element to these homicides. These incidents peak towards the end of the week, with Thursday nights unexpectedly prominent. Directly NTE-related homicides most commonly occur late on Thursday and Friday nights. Homicides indirectly related to the night-time economy occur more evenly across the week, including on Mondays and Tuesdays.

## Homicide case summary details

The following analysis further examined the data on 73 NTE-related homicide case summaries. It classifies the incidents using a typology of scenarios defined by the project's lead investigator. The discussion draws out key features of homicides related to the night-time economy (directly or indirectly) and examines shifts in these across the decades.

### Directly NTE-related homicides 1998–99: General features

The characteristics and circumstances of the 14 homicides in this category and key examples are provided below. These incidents were spread across the states and territories, with a notably higher number occurring in New South Wales. By jurisdiction there were:

- eight homicides in New South Wales;
- two homicides in South Australia;
- two homicides in the Northern Territory;
- one homicide in Victoria; and
- one homicide in Western Australia.

The incidents were also widespread geographically, and surprisingly were not concentrated in the inner city and entertainment districts as might be expected. Only two of these homicides occurred in an inner city (1 in the Sydney CBD and the other in Darwin's); six occurred in suburban locations (4 in Sydney suburbs); and the other six took place in a mix of rural and regional locations.

The homicides occurred in these specific locations:

- four in a licensed hotel or premises (2 in hotels, 1 in a restaurant and 1 in a nightclub);
- six near a licensed hotel or premises (5 just outside and 1 in a car park);
- two at a commercial night business (in a games arcade and a pool hall); and
- two on a street near a commercial night-time leisure area (at an ATM and on the street).

The peak times for these homicides were approaching or during the weekend, with a number concentrated around late to very late-night drinking (on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights—the key problem times).

Only one victim was a woman. Of the 15 victims and 19 perpetrators, more were in their 20s (12) or their 30s (7). Victims ranged in age from their 20s to their 50s, with 11 in their 20s or 30s. Perpetrators had a younger profile; these ranged in age from their teens (2) to their 40s, with six in their 20s.

One case had two victims. In three cases there were two perpetrators and there were three perpetrators in another—a collective mix of parties involved directly in the violence.

Police records and incident narratives provided evidence of alcohol consumption in 13 of the 14 cases. In seven, the victim and the perpetrator both drank; in three cases only the victim drank and in another three, only the perpetrator.

The prevalence of beatings in directly NTE-related homicides aligns with these figures. The weapons/modes of killing in these incidents were:

- fists and feet (5);
- gun/rifle (5);
- knife (3); and
- axe (1).

These 1998–99 homicides appeared to occur in a highly masculine social domain of violence and conflict and assumed two general forms: male-on-male confrontational violence and killings that occurred in the course of another crime or a criminal conflict. Male-on-male confrontation comprised eight of the 1998–99 cases. Another involved a man who killed a woman during an attempted rape, and five occurred in the course of a crime or criminal conflict.

### **Indirectly NTE-related homicides 1998–99: General features**

These 25 homicides occurred across Australia. By jurisdiction, there were:

- 11 homicides in New South Wales;
- five homicides in Queensland;
- five homicides in Victoria;
- two homicides in Western Australia;
- one homicide in South Australia; and
- one homicide in the Australian Capital Territory.

Only two cases occurred in an inner city (both in Sydney); nine occurred in suburbs and another 14 in rural and regional locations (a prominent category).

The location categories were:

- in a home (14);
- in a street/outdoors (6);
- in a caravan park (2);
- in a motel (1);



- in a community hall (1); and
- in an unknown location (1).

The peak time for these homicides was the weekend, but indirectly NTE-related homicides were more spread across the week than were directly NTE-related cases. There were four early on Saturday, three early on Sunday and three later on Sunday. There were two cases each late Tuesday, early Wednesday, late Wednesday, early Thursday, early Friday and late Friday, and one late Saturday. The time of one incident was unknown.

Unlike directly NTE-related cases, the parties involved in these homicides were rarely strangers to each other. Furthermore, 12 of the 26 victims and three of the 32 perpetrators were female. Victims were typically older than perpetrators, being spread across their 20s and 30s (and less concentrated in their 20s), with most aged in their 20s to 30s, and then in their 20s. Of all 26 victims and 32 known perpetrators involved in these incidents, most were in their 20s (23), their 30s (17) or their 40s (9), with fewer in their teens (1), their 50s (4), their 60s (1) and their 70s (1). The ages of two were unknown.

Alcohol was consumed in 24 of 25 cases; victims drank in 18 of these (3 cases drinking unknown) and perpetrators in 23 (2 cases drinking unknown). In 15 cases, both parties had been drinking (with 5 unknown). The weapons/modes of killing used in these homicides were:

- fists and feet (13);
- gun/rifle (2);
- knife (7);
- motor vehicle (2); and
- unknown (2).

The circumstances of these homicides were more diverse than those of the directly NTE-related cases and also reflected a greater proportion of intimate partner violence (involving 4 female and 2 male victims). The motive for the killing was unknown in two cases.

In general, the scenarios fell into four broad categories. These were:

- male-on-male confrontational violence;
- intimate partner killings;
- male-on-female victimisation; and
- killings that occurred in the course of a crime or criminal conflict.

### **Directly NTE-related homicides 2007–08: General features**

As with homicides in the 1997–98 sample year, a majority of the cases occurred in New South Wales. The 13 homicides in 2007–08 occurred in only two states: 10 in New South Wales and three in Queensland.

The locations of these homicides, too, were spread more widely, rather than focused on inner city and entertainment districts. There were two incidents in the central business districts of regional towns, six in the suburbs of cities and large towns (four of these in Sydney), and five in rural and regional locations.

By specific location, these homicides occurred in the following locations:

- three in a licensed hotel or premises;
- four near a licensed hotel or premises: (including a confrontation between an evicted drinker and security, a fight at a taxi rank, and conflict over alleged queue jumping outside a licensed premises);
- three in a street near a commercial night-time leisure area;
- two in a street or outdoors (both in public parks); and
- one in a commercial business (a late-night takeaway food shop).

These homicides again peaked during or approaching the weekend. Very late on Thursday and Friday nights was also a key problem time. The incidence of homicide on Thursday and Friday nights increased over the decade between the sample years—probably in line with a general expansion of night-time leisure across the week.

In the majority of these cases the parties were strangers to each other. Quite surprisingly, two of the crimes involved female perpetrators; one of these involved the use of a motor vehicle as a weapon and the other an attack with a screwdriver following a conflict over a vehicle driving through a crowd of drinkers.

As in 1998–99, most of the 13 victims and 14 perpetrators were in their 20s (11) or their 30s (6). Again, victims ranged in age from their 20s to their 50s, with six in their 20s and another four in their 30s. Perpetrators were generally younger. Once again, these ranged in age from one teenager to people in their 40s, with five in their 20s. The age of three perpetrators of two unsolved killings was unknown.

In all 13 cases one of the parties involved had been drinking, and in nine both the victim and perpetrator had consumed alcohol. In all, 12 victims and 11 perpetrators had been drinking prior to the crime.

There were two perpetrators in one of these cases; all other victims and perpetrators were classified as sole actors. Directly NTE-related violence, therefore, appears to have been less a collective activity than previously. Other people were socially engaged or onlookers in 13 cases—perhaps with less inclination to become directly involved.

The weapons/modes of killing were:

- fists and feet (5);
- gun/rifle (2);
- motor vehicle (2);
- knife (1);
- screwdriver (1);
- branch (1); and
- bat (1).

The circumstances of the directly NTE-related 2007–08 homicides took three general forms, which differed from the 1998–99 scenarios due to the absence of female victims and the involvement of women as perpetrators. The circumstances were:

- male-on-male confrontational violence (8);
- female-on-male victimisation (2); and
- killings that occurred in the course of a crime or criminal conflict (3).

### **Indirectly NTE-related homicides 2007–08: General features**

In contrast to directly-NTE related killings, these 21 cases occurred across Australia. By jurisdiction, there were:

- five homicides in Queensland;
- four homicides in New South Wales;
- four homicides in Western Australia;
- three homicides in South Australia;
- three homicides in Victoria; and
- two homicides in the Northern Territory.

The incidents were widespread; two occurred in inner cities (Adelaide and Darwin), four in suburbs and another 15 in rural and regional locations (a prominent category). By specific location these were:

- in a home (13);
- in a boarding house (1); and
- in a street or outdoors (7).

These homicides were more noticeably spread across the week than were directly NTE-related cases and were clustered around Wednesdays and Sundays.

Unlike directly NTE-related homicides, the parties were strangers to each other in only three of the total 21 killings. Similarly, a much higher proportion of those involved were women—nine victims and four perpetrators. Two of the female perpetrators' victims were women.

All of these crimes were solved. Of the 21 victims and 23 perpetrators, most were in their 20s (11), their 30s (11) or their 40s (12), and fewer in their teens (5 perpetrators) or their 50s (3). Most disturbingly, two victims were infants under two years. Of the other cases, the victims were typically older than the perpetrators.

In seven of these homicides both perpetrator and victim were known to have been drinking. Fourteen of 21 victims and 17 of 23 perpetrators had consumed alcohol prior to the incident.

The weapons/modes of killing were:

- knife (10);
- fists and feet (7);
- motor vehicle (1);
- bodily shaking (1);

- glass bottle (1); and
- iron bar (1).

The circumstances of these homicides were more diverse than those of directly NTE-related cases, and also reflected a greater proportion of intimate partner violence (6 female and 2 male victims). Scenarios took five general forms:

- male-on-male confrontational violence;
- intimate partner killings;
- male-on-female victimisation;
- female-on-female confrontation; and
- infanticide.

No incidents were classified as occurring in the course of a crime or criminal conflict.

## Conclusion

This study confirms alcohol plays a major part in Australian homicides. The per capita rate of homicide is dropping steadily, but it appears the rate of alcohol-related homicide is falling more slowly than the rate of non-alcohol-related homicide. The research confirms fatal incidents directly related to the night-time economy are neither numerous nor concentrated in night-time drinking and leisure districts; rather, they occur in a range of locations including in suburbs, small towns and rural and regional areas.

The number of homicides directly related to the night-time economy in 1998–99 (14 incidents) was almost the same as that in 2007–08 (13 incidents). This period saw a significant expansion of night-time leisure activity across the nation and in specific tourist and entertainment areas. There was an identical level of male-on-male confrontation across this decade but an unexpected number of female-on-male attacks by strangers (non-intimate partners), which may in part reflect increasing female participation in Australian night-time leisure.

Although public anxiety focuses on stranger attacks in developed night-time leisure zones, this sphere and the heavy intoxication it can foster has a flow-on effect on other homicides. This study also confirms that the risk of victimisation for men is concentrated in situations directly related to the night-time economy, while women's risk of victimisation is much higher in indirectly NTE-related scenarios.

In both sample years, the great majority of indirectly NTE-related homicides involved parties who were related in some way (that is, who were not strangers), but close scrutiny of these records suggests a more pronounced quality of personal intensity to the 2007–08 cases. In 2007–08, more male-on-male confrontations involved close relations (including cases involving brothers, and a stepfather and stepson), and only one male-on-male incident involved conflict between strangers.

Personal disputes where one or both parties have consumed alcohol still appear to be the most risky scenario in more private circumstances, such as family and intimate partner conflicts, where there is less possibility a third party will attempt to intervene or initiate restraint. Strategies to limit and reduce fatal alcohol-related conflicts must address the frequency and scale of irrational social conflicts between intoxicated people in situations where the inhibiting effect of surveillance and intervention by third parties is unlikely. General restrictions around sales of and community access to alcohol would be the most obvious first response to this problem.

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