



Juristat

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics



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HOMICIDE IN CANADA - 1996

Orest Fedorowycz

HIGHLIGHTS

- The national homicide rate increased by 6% in 1996, following four straight annual declines. The rate has generally been decreasing since the mid-1970's. The 633 homicides in 1996 were 45 more than in 1995, but fewer than the average for the previous ten years. Part of this increase in 1996 was due to an increase in multiple victim homicides.
- Most provinces/territories reported an increase in homicides, most notably in Manitoba, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. The only decreases were reported in Alberta, New Brunswick and Yukon.
- In general, homicide rates increase from east to west. Manitoba had the highest provincial rate in 1996, followed by British Columbia and Saskatchewan. The lowest rates were in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland.
- Among the nine largest metropolitan areas, Winnipeg reported the highest rate, followed by Vancouver. Calgary and Hamilton had the lowest rates. Montreal's rate was its lowest since 1981, when data were first collected by metropolitan area.
- All categories of firearm homicides increased in 1996. While the 211 shootings were 20% higher than in 1995, they were close to the previous ten-year average (204). Firearms have consistently accounted for about one-third of all homicides since 1979. Handguns once again comprised about half of all firearm homicides.
- Males continue to account for two-thirds of all homicide victims and almost nine out of ten accused.
- Homicides continue to be committed primarily by someone known to the victim. In 1996, 37% of victims were killed by a spouse or other family member, 49% by an acquaintance and 14% by a stranger. The 67 homicides committed by strangers in 1996 were down from 79 in 1995. Over the past 10 years, strangers have accounted for between 12% and 18% of all persons accused of homicide.
- Spousal homicides decreased, from 90 in 1995 to 80 in 1996, with females accounting for over three-quarters of the victims. In addition, 19 females were killed by a boyfriend or ex-boyfriend. In all, about 40% of female homicide victims were killed by someone with whom they had an intimate relationship with at some point in time.
- The youth homicide rate has remained relatively stable for the last decade. From 1986 to 1995, an average of 49 youths were charged with homicide each year, representing 9% of all homicide accused. In 1996, 51 youths were charged with homicide, accounting for 8% of all persons accused of homicide.



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INTRODUCTION

Homicide tends to receive more media attention and consequently closer public scrutiny than any other criminal act. The act itself, especially if cruel in nature or targeting defenceless members of society, promotes fear in the general public. Despite a growing concern among Canadians about threats of attack or violence, the homicide rate has gradually been declining since the mid 1970s.

Virtually all homicides are brought to the attention of the police by the public or are discovered during police investigation. This Juristat examines long-term and short-term trends and the circumstances surrounding homicide incidents. In addition, this report compares rates among major metropolitan areas, provinces and territories, and selected countries.

In Canada, criminal homicide is classified as first degree murder, second degree murder, manslaughter or infanticide. Deaths caused by criminal negligence, suicide, accidental or justifiable homicide are not included in this classification.

GENERAL TRENDS

Homicide rate up, but generally declining since 1975

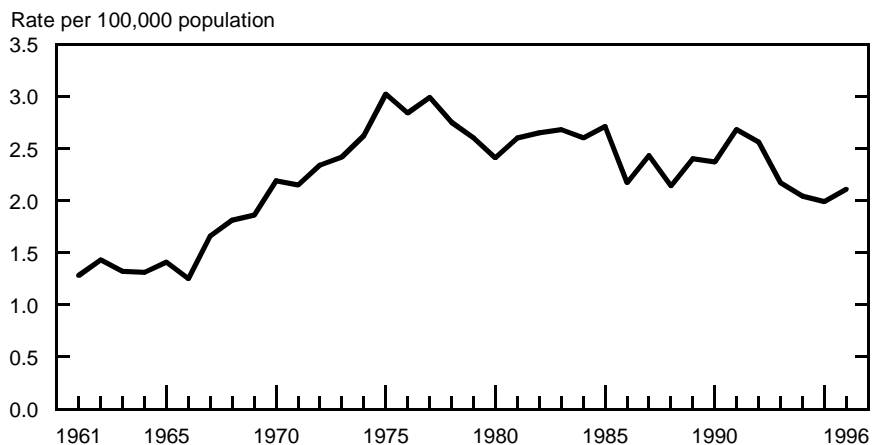
Homicide is a relatively rare occurrence in Canada, accounting for 0.02% of the almost three million *Criminal Code* incidents reported to police in 1996. After several years of decline, the homicide rate increased in 1996. There were 633 homicide offences reported in 1996, 45 more than the previous year, but still below the average of 640 for the previous decade. The 1996 homicide rate of 2.11 per 100,000 population represented a 6% increase from the 1995 rate. It is difficult to say if this increase is the start of a new trend or simply part of normal year-to-year fluctuations. Part of the increase seen in 1996 is due to an increase in multiple victim homicides.

Since 1961, when national homicide statistics were first collected, there have been two distinct trends. After several years of stability, the homicide rate increased steadily from 1.25 per 100,000 population in 1966 to a peak of 3.02 in 1975, an increase of 142%. From 1975 to 1996, despite yearly fluctuations, the homicide rate has gradually declined, from 3.02 per 100,000 to 2.11, a decrease of 30% (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Homicide Rate, 1961-1996



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Table 1



Homicide Rates for Selected Countries

Country	1996 homicide rate per 100,000	Country	1996 homicide rate per 100,000
Northern Ireland	0.13	Ireland (1995)	1.62
Netherlands (1995)	0.20	Italy	1.67
Australia (1995)	0.97	France	2.01
Sweden (1995)	1.08	Canada	2.11
Switzerland	1.14	Scotland	2.55
England & Wales	1.40	Hungary	2.62
Germany	1.52	United States	7.50

Source: National Central Bureau - Interpol Ottawa.

Homicide rate decreasing in United States

According to preliminary figures, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported an 11% decrease in the number of homicides in the United States in 1996. There were just over 19,000 homicides reported for that year, representing a rate of about 7.5 per 100,000 population. Although Canada's rate (2.11) was approximately one-quarter that of the United States, it was still higher than many European countries. For example, England and Wales reported a homicide rate of 1.4 per 100,000 population in 1996, almost 34% lower than Canada's rate (Table 1).¹

Violent crime rate decreasing since 1992

In contrast to the trend in homicide rates, the violent crime rate more than doubled from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, primarily because of large increases in Level I assaults, where physical injury inflicted on the victim is relatively minor. In the early 1980's, changes in legislation (rape and indecent assault), police charging or recording practices (eg. in spousal assault cases), and reduced societal tolerance of certain types of violence (eg. school violence) contributed at least partly to the increased rates of assault.² However, the violent crime rate has been decreasing since 1992.³

Speculation that the declining homicide rate over the past few years may in part be due to victims of attempted murders being saved by more advanced medical procedures and the increased use of paramedics, implies that the number of these incidents in Canada would have increased in recent years. In fact, the trend in the rate of attempted murders is almost parallel to that of homicide. Therefore, it appears that the general decline in the homicide rate must be attributed to other factors.

GEOGRAPHICAL PATTERNS IN HOMICIDE

Homicide rate increased in most provinces/territories

Most provinces have generally followed the national trend of declining homicide rates since the mid-1970's. The exception has been in the Atlantic provinces where homicide rates, while low to begin with, have remained relatively constant over the last 20 years.

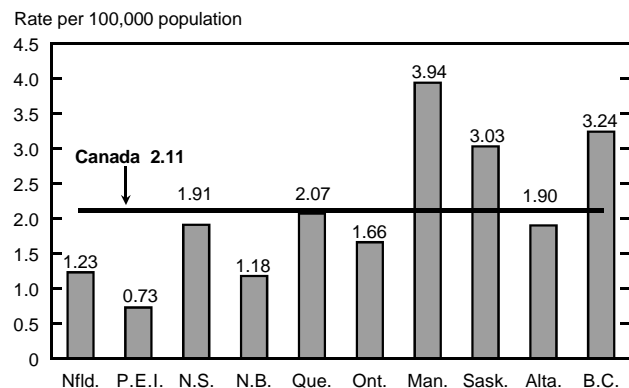
Eight provinces/territories reported an increase in homicides in 1996 (Table 2), most notably Manitoba (+18), Quebec (+18), and Saskatchewan (+10). Despite the fact that Montréal had its lowest homicide rate since CMA data were first collected (1981), total homicides in Québec increased. The increases in Manitoba, Québec and Saskatchewan were primarily due to homicides involving acquaintances. The number of homicides fell in Alberta (-7), New Brunswick (-5), and Yukon (-4).

As is the case historically, rates were generally higher in the west than in the east (Figure 2). Manitoba recorded the highest rate (3.94 per 100,000 population), its highest since 1987, followed by British Columbia (3.24), and Saskatchewan (3.03). Prince Edward Island, with one homicide, once again recorded the lowest rate (0.73), followed by New Brunswick (1.18), and Newfoundland (1.23).

Figure 2



Homicide Rates by Province, 1996



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

¹ Information provided by the National Central Bureau - Interpol Ottawa.

² Kingsley, B. *Crime Counts - A Criminal Event Analysis*, edited by L. Kennedy and V. Sacco, Toronto, Nelson Canada, 1996:101.

³ Kong, R.. 1997. *Canadian Crime Statistics - 1996, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 17 No. 8. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.*

Table 2



Homicides by Province/Territory, 1995 and 1996

Province/Territory	1996 ¹		1995 ¹		Average 1986-1995	
	Number	Rate ²	Number	Rate ²	Number	Rate ²
Newfoundland	7	1.23	5	0.87	5	0.86
Prince Edward Island	1	0.73	1	0.74	1	0.68
Nova Scotia	18	1.91	17	1.81	16	1.77
New Brunswick	9	1.18	14	1.84	14	1.85
Québec	153	2.07	135	1.84	165	2.34
Ontario	187	1.66	181	1.63	194	1.87
Manitoba	45	3.94	27	2.38	36	3.25
Saskatchewan	31	3.03	21	2.07	27	2.60
Alberta	53	1.90	60	2.18	70	2.69
British Columbia	125	3.24	120	3.19	105	3.11
Yukon	-	0.00	4	13.20	2	7.60
Northwest Territories	4	6.01	3	4.56	7	14.60
CANADA³	633	2.11	588	1.99	640	2.29

¹ The following number of homicides were reported and included in 1996 but occurred in previous years: Nfld - 1; N.S. - 1; N.B. - 1; Que. - 1; Ont. - 6; Sask. - 1; Alta. - 1; B.C. - 2; N.W.T. - 1; TOTAL - 15.

² Rates are calculated per 100,000 population using updated postcensal estimates.

³ Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

- Nil or zero.

[†] Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Homicide rate in major metropolitan areas slightly lower than national average

Crime, particularly homicide, is often considered to be an urban phenomenon. In 1996, the homicide rate for all the 25 Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) was 2.04, slightly lower than the national rate of 2.11.

Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) - a large urban core (population of 100,000 and over) together with adjacent urban and rural areas which have a high degree of economic and social integration. It is important to note that, due to the relatively small number of homicides within some of the smaller CMAs, homicide rates for these areas can change dramatically from year to year.

Table 3 divides the CMAs into three population categories and shows that the nine largest CMAs (populations of 500,000 and over) had a homicide rate (2.13), slightly higher than the national rate of 2.11. The other CMA groups (250,000 - 499,999 population and 100,000 - 249,999 population) reported rates of 1.51 and 2.01, respectively.

Among the nine largest CMAs, Winnipeg reported the highest rate (4.12), followed by Vancouver (2.97). Québec City reported a rate (2.15) about 20% higher than its average rate for the previous ten years. The lowest rates were reported for Calgary (1.41) and Hamilton (1.56). Both Calgary and Edmonton had rates that were notably lower than their previous ten-year averages (-39% and -32%, respectively). Canada's largest metropolitan area, Toronto, continued to report a homicide rate (1.79) below the national average.

Among the seven CMA's with populations of 250,000 - 499,999, St. Catharines-Niagara reported the highest homicide rate (2.30), while Windsor, with two homicides, reported the lowest rate (0.68). Windsor's rate was its lowest since 1981, when CMA data were first collected.

For the nine CMA's with populations less than 250,000, Regina (4.02), Sherbrooke (3.36), and Sudbury (3.00) reported the highest rates, while Chicoutimi-Jonquière and Saint John recorded no homicides.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMICIDE INCIDENTS

First degree murders show a steady increase

With the abolition of capital punishment in 1976 (Bill C-105), murder was categorized into first and second-degree (see Glossary of Terms for definitions of homicide). First degree murder, as a proportion of all homicides, rose steadily from 36% in 1978 to 57% in 1996. There was a corresponding decline in the proportion of second degree murders reported by the police, from 54% in 1978 to 34% in 1996. During the same time period, the proportion of manslaughters has remained relatively stable at about 9%, as has the percentage of infanticides (less than 1% annually).

The classification of homicide offences in this report is based upon initial police investigation. In the transition period from initial police charging of the accused to final court disposition, the legal classification of an incident may be altered.

Multiple victim homicides increased in 1996

In 1996, 573 separate homicide incidents involving 633 victims were reported by the police. The majority of these incidents (93%) involved a single victim, while 7% were multiple-victim incidents. The 40 multiple-victim incidents (up from 27 in 1995) were distributed as follows: 30 incidents involved two victims, six incidents with three victims, two incidents with four victims, one incident with five victims, and one incident with nine victims. Almost 60% of these incidents were family-related.

Table 3

Homicides by Census Metropolitan Area, 1995 and 1996

Census Metropolitan Area	1996 ¹			1995 ¹			Average 1986-1995		
	Population (000s)	Number	Rate ²	Population (000s)	Number	Rate ²	Population (000s)	Number	Rate ²
500,000+ population									
Toronto	4,410.3	79	1.79	4,344.3	74	1.70	3,890.5	76	1.94
Montréal	3,365.2	71	2.11	3,337.2	77	2.31	3,148.4	97	3.08
Vancouver	1,883.7	56	2.97	1,831.0	64	3.50	1,585.6	52	3.30
Ottawa-Hull	1,039.3	17	1.64	1,022.7	28	2.74	915.0	16	1.72
Ontario	781.1	11	1.41	771.1	24	3.11	693.4	12	1.70
Québec	258.2	6	2.32	251.6	4	1.59	221.5	4	1.76
Edmonton	890.8	20	2.25	885.2	19	2.15	825.3	27	3.30
Calgary	853.7	12	1.41	831.8	18	2.16	737.2	17	2.32
Québec	699.0	15	2.15	693.5	4	0.58	647.4	12	1.78
Winnipeg	680.3	28	4.12	677.7	16	2.36	654.3	19	2.90
Hamilton	657.2	10	1.52	643.0	17	2.64	606.0	11	1.88
Total³	14,479.5	308	2.13	14,266.4	317	2.22	13,009.7	327	2.51
250,000 - 499,999 population									
London	420.6	4	0.95	413.0	3	0.73	376.2	5	1.33
Kitchener	404.2	6	1.48	395.4	3	0.76	353.4	6	1.61
St. Catharines-Niagara	391.1	9	2.30	386.3	1	0.26	364.7	9	2.33
Halifax	344.1	7	2.03	342.4	6	1.75	318.9	7	2.29
Victoria	315.2	6	1.90	311.2	6	1.93	284.7	5	1.72
Windsor	294.1	2	0.68	285.7	8	2.80	268.6	7	2.49
Oshawa	281.9	3	1.06	275.8	-	0.00	234.6	4	1.66
Total³	2,451.2	37	1.51	2,409.8	27	1.12	2,201.1	42	1.91
100,000 - 249,999 population									
Saskatoon	223.5	4	1.79	220.7	3	1.36	209.2	5	2.44
Regina	199.2	8	4.02	198.8	3	1.51	193.1	6	2.95
St. John's	185.2	3	1.62	178.5	4	2.24	171.3	2	0.99
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	167.9	-	0.00	167.0	1	0.60	161.3	2	1.24
Sudbury	166.7	5	3.00	166.4	4	2.40	158.7	4	2.71
Sherbrooke	148.9	5	3.36	148.3	-	0.00	140.8	1	0.99
Trois-Rivières	142.0	3	2.11	143.2	2	1.40	135.5	3	2.07
Saint John	129.4	-	0.00	129.4	3	2.32	126.1	4	2.78
Thunder Bay	130.0	2	1.54	131.0	5	3.82	127.7	4	2.82
Total³	1,492.8	30	2.01	1,483.3	25	1.69	1,423.7	30	2.11
CMA TOTALS	18,423.5	375	2.04	18,159.5	369	2.03	16,634.5	399	2.40
< 100,000 population	11,540.1	258	2.24	11,455.8	219	1.91	11,295.3	241	2.14
CANADA	29,963.6	633	2.11	29,615.3	588	1.99	27,929.8	640	2.29

¹ The following number of homicides were reported and included in 1996 but occurred in previous years: Toronto - 1; Vancouver - 1; Ottawa-Hull - 1; Calgary - 1; Kitchener - 1; Halifax - 1; Oshawa - 1; Sudbury - 1; Areas < 100,000 population - 7; TOTAL - 15.

² Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.

³ Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

- Nil or zero.

[†] Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Eight in ten homicides solved by police

During 1996, 78% of reported homicide incidents were solved by the police through the identification of at least one accused. Over the past ten years, this proportion has fluctuated between 77% and 85%. Since the process of solving a homicide can be time-consuming, an incident may not be solved until after the year in which it was initially recorded. These data, therefore, underestimate final police clearance rates.

Of those incidents cleared in 1996, 91% were cleared by a charge being laid, 8% by the accused having committed suicide immediately following the offence, and the remaining 1% were cleared by the death of the accused (other than suicide). Of the 36 incidents cleared by suicide, 30 were of a domestic nature.

Almost half of victims killed in own residence

Of the 552 homicide incidents with a known location (21 were unknown), almost two-thirds of these occurred in a private residence in 1996: 47% occurred in a residence occupied by the victim (either solely or jointly with the accused); 9% occurred in the residence of the accused; and the remaining 9% in other residences. The majority of spousal homicides (88%) and other homicides within the family (96%) occurred in private residences.

The remaining one-third of locations were distributed as follows: 22% in an open area (e.g., a parking lot, street or field), 8% in a commercial area (e.g., bar, bank, restaurant), 3% in a private vehicle and the remaining 2% in a public institution (correctional facility (7), school (1), group home (1) and hockey arena (1)).

In 1996, females were more likely to be killed in a private residence than males (80% versus 61%). This is not surprising, given two facts: females are killed in greater proportion by spouses and family members (61% for females compared to 24% for males), and spousal homicides usually occur in a private residence.

FIREARMS

Canada has adopted a number of legislative measures which are aimed at reducing firearm deaths and injuries. In 1977, Parliament passed legislation which amended the *Criminal Code* (Bill C-51), requiring individuals to obtain a Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC) before acquiring firearms. The legislation also introduced a variety of provisions including regulations on safe storage and display of firearms for businesses and bona fide gun collectors, and mandatory minimum sentences to deter the criminal use of firearms. In 1991, Parliament strengthened the screening provisions for FAC applicants by introducing new legislation (Bill C-17). A multi-page form with a variety of questions concerning the applicant's personal and criminal history, personal references, picture, and a mandatory 28 day waiting period for approved FAC applicants were incorporated. Under this legislation all firearm owners have to comply with safe storage, handling, display, and transportation of firearms. In 1995, Parliament passed Canada's newest firearms legislation (Bill C-68) which created a new *Firearms Act* and amended the *Criminal Code*. Under the 1995 legislation, all firearm owners and users will be required to obtain a firearm licence and all firearms will have to be registered (this includes non-restricted rifles and shotguns). In addition, strict new penalties have been created for firearms trafficking and smuggling, and tougher mandatory minimum sentences were introduced for 10 serious offences involving firearms. The new legislation is intended to reduce firearm deaths and injuries by further encouraging the safe use and storage of firearms, assisting police investigations, and deterring the misuse of firearms. Other countries (e.g. England and Australia) have also introduced stricter firearm legislation in recent years.

Homicides involving firearms increase in 1996

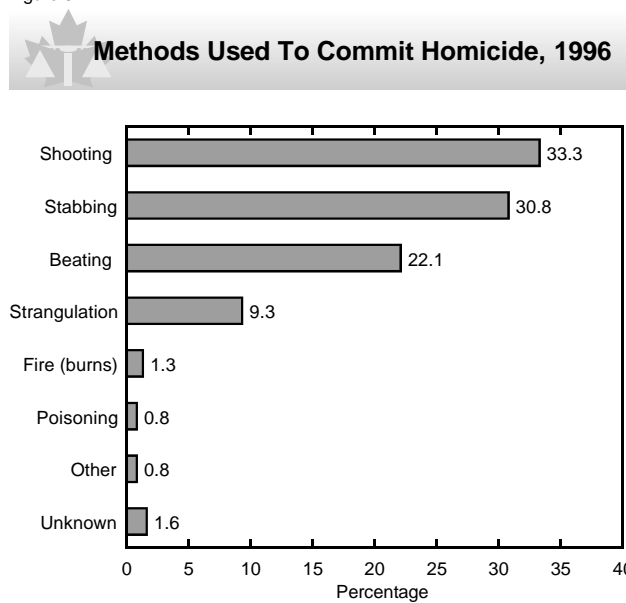
There are approximately 200 homicides each year using firearms. Homicides, however, account for a relatively small portion of all firearm-related deaths. Of the 1,125 deaths in Canada involving firearms in 1995 (the latest year that figures were available), the largest proportion of these deaths were due to suicide (81%), followed by homicide (13%), accidents (4%), and other types (2%).⁴

Since 1979, firearms have been used in about one-third of all homicides each year and this was also true in 1996 (Figure 3). While the 211 shootings in 1996 represented a 20% increase over the total in 1995, they were close to the average total (204) for the previous ten years. These shootings were distributed as follows: 106 (50%) with a handgun, 81 (38%) with a rifle/shotgun, 16 (8%) with a sawed-off rifle/shotgun, and 8 (4%) with a fully-automatic firearm. All types of firearm homicides increased in 1996, particularly homicides using rifles/shotguns (20 more than the previous year).

In the past, domestic homicides were less likely than other types of homicide to involve firearms. However, in 1996, 32% of domestic homicides involved firearms compared to 29% for non-domestic homicides (for unsolved homicides, 45% were

⁴ Statistics Canada. *Causes of Death, Catalogue 84-208, Health Statistics Division, 1997.*

Figure 3



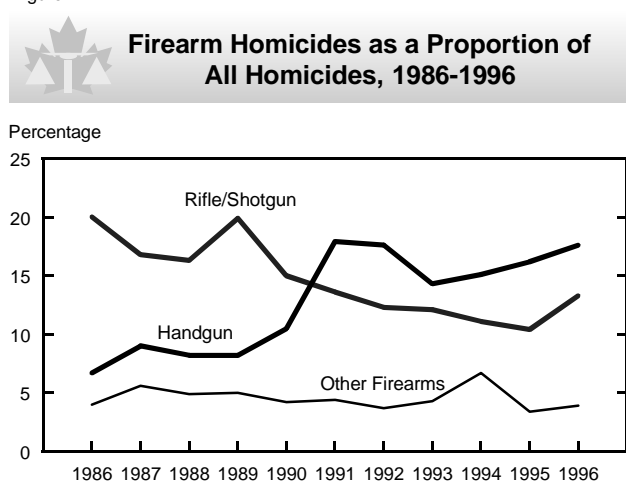
Source: *Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.*

committed with firearms). In the 59 domestic firearm homicides in 1996, rifles and shotguns (including sawed-off guns) were used in 70% of the cases.

Between 1975 and 1990, one in ten homicides were committed each year with handguns. Since 1991, handguns have accounted for one in every six homicides. Despite an increase in 1996, the use of rifles/shotguns in homicides has generally been decreasing, from 30% in 1974 to 20% in 1989 to the present level of 13% in 1996 (Figure 4). Fully-automatic weapons were used in 1% of all homicides in 1996 (Table 4).


While firearms were the most common weapon used in homicides in 1996, stabbings accounted for 31%, beatings - 22%, strangulation/suffocation - 9%, fire (burns) - 1% and poisoning - 1% (Table 5).

Figure 4



Source: *Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.*

Table 4



Homicides involving Firearms, 1976-1996

Year	Handgun		Rifle/Shotgun		Fully automatic firearm ¹		Sawed-off rifle/shotgun		Other firearms		Total homicides involving firearms	
	Number	% of Total Homicides	Number	% of Total Homicides	Number	% of Total Homicides	Number	% of Total Homicides	Number	% of Total Homicides	Number	% of Total Homicides
1976	68	10.2	165	24.7	...	...	5	0.7	20	3.0	258	38.6
1977	61	8.6	161	22.6	...	...	14	2.0	24	3.4	260	36.6
1978	63	9.5	177	26.8	...	...	2	0.3	8	1.2	250	37.8
1979	54	8.6	135	21.4	...	...	4	0.6	14	2.2	207	32.8
1980	62	10.5	120	20.3	...	...	4	0.7	9	1.5	195	32.9
1981	59	9.1	123	19.0	...	...	2	0.3	15	2.3	199	30.7
1982	88	13.2	146	21.9	...	...	9	1.3	5	0.7	248	37.2
1983	78	11.4	127	18.6	...	...	4	0.6	15	2.2	224	32.8
1984	66	9.9	142	21.3	...	...	2	0.3	18	2.7	228	34.2
1985	73	10.4	131	18.6	...	...	9	1.3	9	1.3	222	31.5
1986	38	6.7	114	20.0	...	...	1	0.2	22	3.9	175	30.8
1987	58	9.0	108	16.8	...	...	7	1.1	29	4.5	202	31.4
1988	47	8.2	94	16.3	...	...	7	1.2	21	3.6	169	29.3
1989	54	8.2	131	19.9	...	...	3	0.5	30	4.6	218	33.2
1990	69	10.5	99	15.0	...	...	1	0.2	27	4.1	196	29.7
1991	135	17.9	103	13.6	6	0.8	25	3.3	2	0.3	271	35.8
1992	129	17.6	90	12.3	12	1.6	15	2.0	-	0.0	246	33.6
1993	90	14.3	76	12.1	11	1.7	15	2.4	1	0.2	193	30.6
1994	90	15.1	66	11.1	14	2.3	26	4.4	-	0.0	196	32.9
1995 ^r	95	16.2	61	10.4	5	0.9	15	2.6	-	0.0	176	30.0
1996	106	16.7	81	12.8	8	1.3	16	2.5	-	0.0	211	33.3

¹ This category was introduced in 1991 and may account for some of the decrease in the numbers for the "other firearms" category.


... Figures not applicable or not appropriate.

- Nil or zero.

^r Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Table 5



Homicides by Cause of Death, 1995 and 1996

Cause of death	1996		1995 ^r		Average 1986-1995	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Shooting	211	33.3	176	29.9	205	31.9
Stabbing	195	30.8	183	31.1	186	29.1
Beating	140	22.1	120	20.4	129	20.1
Strangulation	59	9.3	70	11.9	71	11.0
Fire (burns)	8	1.3	20	3.4	21	3.2
Poisoning ¹	5	0.8	6	1.0	4	0.6
Other ²	5	0.8	6	1.0	19	3.0
Unknown	10	1.6	7	1.2	7	1.0
Total³	633	100.0	588	100.0	640	100.0

¹ A separate category since 1991.

² Prior to 1991, included poisoning.

³ Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

^r Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

AGE AND SEX OF VICTIMS AND ACCUSED

Males continue to account for two-thirds of victims and nine in ten accused

Historically, about two-thirds of homicide victims are male. This pattern also held true in 1996. The median ages for male and female victims of homicide were 33 and 35 years of age, respectively.

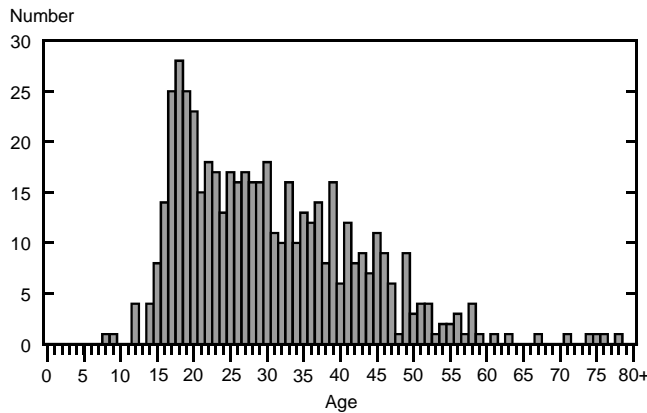
Males accounted for 89% of all those accused of homicide in 1996, consistent with the average for the previous ten years. Females accused of homicide tend to kill family members (56% of the time) more often than male accused (31%).

Age of accused increasing

In the United States, much has been made of the fact that persons accused of homicide have become increasingly younger over the past decade. This does not appear to be the case, however, in Canada. The median age of those accused of homicide has actually increased slightly over the past 25 years. From 1974 to 1986, the median age of the accused was either 26 or 27 years. Since 1986, the median age has ranged from 27 to 29 years. The most common single age for someone accused of homicide in 1996 was 18 years (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Homicide Accused by Age, 1996

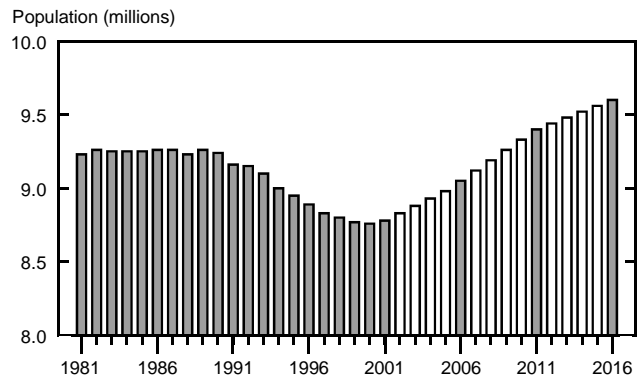


Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

The 15-34 age group tends to be the highest risk group for committing homicide, accounting for about 70% of all accused in a given year, while comprising approximately 30% of the total population. The population in this age group has been shrinking in number since 1990, and is expected to reach its smallest size around the year 2000, at which point it is projected to increase again (Figure 6). All other factors remaining constant, the homicide rate may be expected to continue its general decline until the end of this decade, due to the decreasing size of this high-risk age group.

Figure 6

Actual and Projected Population of 15-34 Age Group, 1981-2016



Note: Unshaded bars represent imputed values

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

ACCUSED-VICTIM RELATIONSHIP

Homicides committed by strangers decreased in 1996

In general, people are more fearful of being victims of violence at the hands of a stranger than of someone they know. Media coverage of murders perpetrated by strangers tends to reinforce this fear in the minds of the public. However, data indicate that homicides are more likely to be committed by someone known to the victim than by a stranger.

Of the homicides in 1996 where an accused was identified, 37% of the victims were killed by a spouse or other family member, 49% were killed by an acquaintance, and 14% were killed by a stranger (Table 6). Although 1996 showed a 12% decrease in the number of homicides committed by strangers, the proportion of stranger homicides has remained relatively stable over the past ten years, ranging from 12% to 18% (Figure 7). Almost 60% of incidents where victims were killed by strangers occurred during the commission of another offence, and in 87% of these cases the victims were male. Male victims were three times more likely to be killed by strangers (18%) than female victims (5%), as well as being at greater risk of being killed by a non-intimate acquaintance (54% versus 23%). These patterns are also evident for other violent crimes.

Spousal homicides decreasing

Spousal homicides include persons in registered marriages, in common-law relationships and persons separated or divorced from such unions. These homicides continue to account for one out of every six *solved* homicides. In 1996, 80 persons were killed by a spouse, down from 90 the previous year, with women representing three-quarters of these victims.

Table 6

Solved Homicides by Accused-Victim Relationship¹, 1995 and 1996

Relationship Type (Accused was)	1996		1995 ¹		Average 1991-1995	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<i>Family Relationship</i>						
Husband (legal and common-law)	39	7.9	53	11.0	55	10.3
Husband (separated/divorced)	23	4.7	16	3.3	19	3.6
Wife (legal and common-law)	15	3.1	20	4.1	20	3.7
Wife (separated/divorced)	3	0.6	1	0.2	2	0.3
Father	35	7.1	30	6.2	23	4.4
Mother	12	2.4	12	2.5	17	3.2
Child	25	5.1	9	1.9	18	3.4
Sibling	7	1.4	14	2.9	13	2.4
Other family relation	24	4.9	20	4.1	18	3.3
Total Family³	183	37.3	175	36.2	186	34.7
<i>Acquaintance</i>						
(ex) Boyfriend/girlfriend	29	5.9	25	5.2	29	5.3
Close Acquaintance	28	5.7	33	6.8	33	6.1
Business associate (legal)	8	1.6	12	2.5	19	3.5
Criminal relationships ²	36	7.3	31	6.4	40	7.4
Neighbour	30	6.1	19	3.9	24	4.5
Casual acquaintance	110	22.4	101	20.9	123	22.9
Total Acquaintance³	241	49.1	221	45.8	266	49.8
Stranger	67	13.6	79	16.4	76	14.1
Unknown relationship	-	0.0	8	1.7	8	1.4
TOTAL SOLVED HOMICIDES	491	100.0	483	100.0	535	100.0

¹ Includes only homicide incidents in which there are known suspects; if there was more than one suspect, only the closest relationship to the victim was recorded.

² Includes prostitutes, drug dealers and their clients.

³ Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

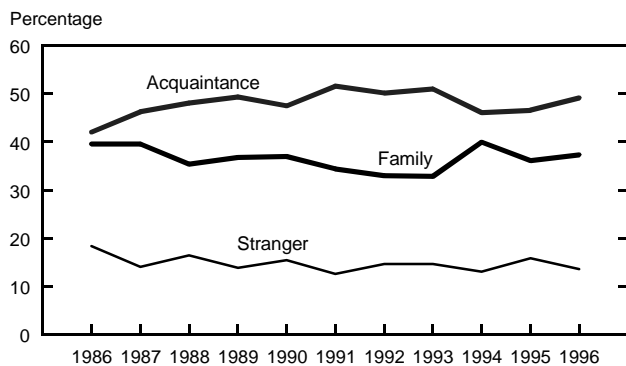
- Nil or zero.

⁴ Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Figure 7

Homicides by Accused-Victim Relationship, 1986-1996



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

In 1996, 39 women were killed by a current spouse (legal or common-law), and 23 were killed by a separated or divorced spouse. The data also show that women were seven times

more likely to be killed by a spouse than by a stranger. Of the 18 men killed by a spouse in 1996, 15 were killed by a current spouse and 3 by a separated spouse. In 1996, 6 in 10 incidents of spousal homicides involved a history of domestic violence known to police (9 in 10 incidents when the victim was female).

Research has suggested that wives are at risk particularly within the first 2 months after separation.⁵ In addition to being killed by a spouse or ex-spouse, females are also at risk from boyfriends and ex-boyfriends. Nineteen females were killed in 1996 by current or former boyfriends. In all, about 40% of all female victims in 1996 were killed by a male with whom they had an intimate relationship at one point in time, either through marriage or dating.

Other family-related homicides

Other family-related homicides in 1996 included: 47 victims killed by a parent (35 by a father/step-father and 12 by a mother), 25 by one of their children (up from 9 in 1995), 7 by a sibling, and 24 by another relative. Of the 47 children killed by parents, the majority were male (61%), while almost three-quarters (72%) were less than six years old.

⁵ Wilson, M, and M. Daly. 1993. *Spousal Homicide Risk and Estrangement, Violence and Victims* 8.

Violence against children is a source of major concern in Canadian society. There were 53 children (under the age of 12) killed in 1996, compared with an average of 55 killed each year since 1986. Between 1986 and 1995, females were accused in 39% of homicides involving children compared to 10% of homicides involving adults; in 1996, the proportions were 28% and 9%, respectively. Research indicates that mothers who kill their children are younger than other female offenders, and those charged with infanticide are "barely more than children themselves".⁶ Of the females implicated in child homicide during the past decade, 13% were under the age of 18, and 39% were under the age of 25. In 1996, no females under 18 years were charged with killing a child; however, of the females charged, almost half were 18-24 years of age.

Infants at risk

During the previous ten years, there has been an annual average of 18 victims of homicide under one year of age, accounting for between 2.5% and 5.0% of all victims. The figure for infants may be under-reported since some claims of accidental childhood deaths such as falls or "sudden infant deaths" could actually be due to child abuse. However, in 1995, most provinces legislated mandatory coroner inquests into deaths of children less than two years of age, which may result in improved reporting of these cases in the future.

Of the 18 infants under one year of age who were killed in 1996, 14 were killed by a parent (11 by the father and 3 by the mother), one by a brother, one by an acquaintance, and in two cases the accused were unknown. Under Section 233 of the *Criminal Code*, there is a provision for diminished responsibility in the case of a mother killing her new-born child, if at the time of the act she was not fully recovered from the act of giving birth or the effect of lactation and consequently her mind was disturbed. In 1996, one of the three accused mothers was charged with *infanticide*.

Increase in children killing their parents in 1996

Since 1975, an average of 19 parents have been killed each year by their children. In 1996, 25 parents were killed by their children. The median age for the victims was 54 years and for the accused, 21 years. As for a motive, 70% of these homicides were the result of a quarrel or an assault, 15% were committed for financial gain and, for the remaining incidents, the motive was not known.

ALCOHOL/DRUG INVOLVEMENT

For the purposes of this report, "drugs" refer to illegal, controlled and restricted substances as defined by the Narcotic Control Act and the Food and Drugs Act.

One-half of accused and four in ten victims had consumed alcohol/drugs

Alcohol and drugs are known to play a role in the commission of many crimes including homicide. In 1996, police reported that 38% of homicide victims had consumed alcohol, drugs or both

at the time of the offence. This pattern has remained consistent since 1991 when this element was first collected in the homicide survey. Where the blood-alcohol concentration level of the victim was known to police (325 instances), 21% of these victims were found to be over the legal driving limit. Male victims were one-and-a-half times as likely to have consumed alcohol and/or drugs as female victims.

In 1996, consistent with previous years, police reported that one-half of all accused had consumed alcohol, drugs or both at the time of the offence. There was little difference between male and female accused.

One in ten homicides are drug-related

Drugs and drug-dealing are believed to be the causes of many types of crimes, including homicide. Accordingly, in 1991, the following question was added to the homicide survey: "was there evidence of drug trafficking or settling of drug-related accounts". In 1996, one in ten (56) homicide incidents were reported by the police to be drug-related and nine of the victims were drug dealers, similar to the averages for the previous five years.

One-quarter of all homicide incidents reported in 1996 occurred during the commission of another criminal offence. Of these 154 incidents, 110 were committed at the same time as another violent offence: 42 during an assault, 39 during a robbery, 17 during a sexual assault, 4 during a kidnapping, and 8 during other violent offences. A further 16 homicides occurred during a property offence, and 28 in combination with other types of criminal offences.

OCCUPATIONS AT RISK

Two police officers murdered in the line of duty

Some occupations involve more risk to personal safety than others. In Canada, the murder of police officers in the line of duty is a relatively rare occurrence. Since 1961, an average of three police officers each year have been murdered while performing their duties. In 1996, two police officers were victims of homicide (neither by a firearm). By comparison, 53 police officers were victims of homicide in the United States in 1996 (preliminary data), all but four killed with a firearm.

Taxi drivers are also a high-risk group because of the nature of their job. In 1996, three taxi drivers were killed, all believed to be in connection with a robbery attempt.

Prostitutes at high risk

Other victims of homicide killed in the course of their work included ten known prostitutes. It should be noted that the number of prostitutes reported killed most likely under-represents the actual figure: only those incidents where the police are certain that the victim was killed in the course of engaging in prostitution-related activities are counted.⁷

⁶ Silverman, R. and L. Kennedy. *Deadly Deeds - Murder in Canada*, Nelson Canada, 1988: 188.

⁷ For more information - Duchesne, D. 1997. *Street Prostitution in Canada*, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 17 No. 2.

YOUTH HOMICIDE

Since the introduction of the *Young Offenders Act* in 1984, much publicity has focussed on youths accused of homicide and their subsequent treatment by the courts. In this report, "youths" represent persons 12 to 17 years of age.

Youth homicide rate stable

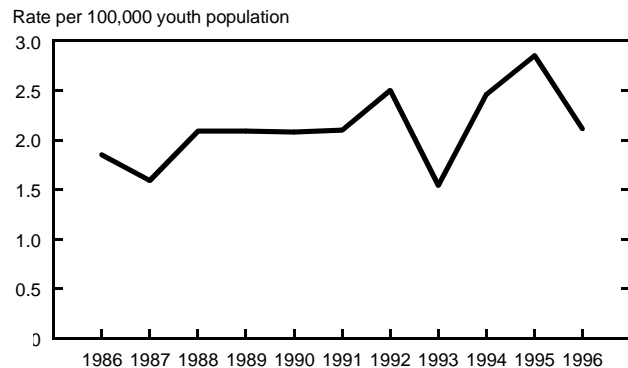
Over the last ten years, the youth homicide rate has remained relatively stable while the homicide rate for adults has generally been decreasing. From 1986 through 1995, an average of 49 youths were charged each year, accounting for an average of 9% of homicide suspects annually, similar to their population share (Table 7). In 1996, 51 youths were charged with homicide, representing 8% of all persons accused of homicide. This number was 17 fewer than the previous year, when an unusually high number of youths were charged with homicide. The youth homicide rate has remained between 1.5 and 2.9 per 100,000 youths since 1986 (Figure 8).

Youths tend to kill other youths

Between 1986 and 1996, there were almost 900 youth victims accounting for 13% of all victims. Youth victims accounted for 28% of all victims killed by a youth and accounted for 11% of all

Figure 8

Youths (Aged 12 to 17 Years) Accused of Homicide, 1986-1996



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

victims killed by an adult. In comparison, for the same period, there were almost 2,600 adult victims aged 25-39 years accounting for 37% of all victims. This age group accounted for 20% of all victims killed by a youth and accounted for 38% of all victims killed by an adult (Table 8).

Table 7

Youths (12-17 Years) Accused of Homicide, Canada, 1986-1996

Year	Youth Population (Aged 12-17) (000s)	Number	Rate per 100,000 Youth Population	Percent of Total Accused (%)
1986	2,272.4	42	1.85	7.6
1987	2,260.9	36	1.59	6.1
1988	2,249.5	47	2.09	8.9
1989	2,245.7	47	2.09	8.4
1990	2,260.1	47	2.08	8.5
1991	2,284.8	48	2.10	7.5
1992	2,315.8	58	2.50	9.0
1993	2,341.2 ^r	36	1.54 ^r	6.6 ^r
1994	2,360.9 ^r	58	2.46 ^r	10.7 ^r
1995	2,386.4 ^r	68 ^r	2.85 ^r	12.2 ^r
1996	2,416.6	51	2.11	8.2

^r Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Table 8

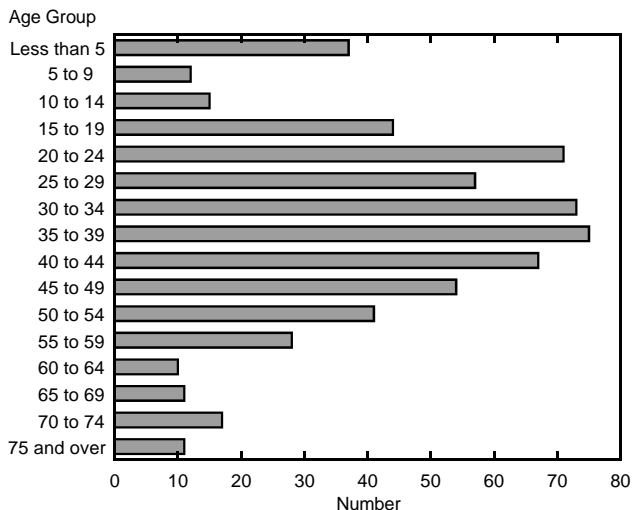
Homicide Victims and Accused by Age Group, 1986-1996

Victim Age Group	Youth Accused 1986-1996	Adult Accused 1986-1996
Less than 12 years	8.6%	7.9%
12-17 years	19.1%	3.4%
18-24 years	15.7%	16.5%
25-39 years	19.6%	37.9%
40-59 years	23.3%	24.8%
60 years and older	13.7%	9.6%
TOTALS	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Figure 9

 **Homicide Victims by Age Group, 1996**



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

METHODOLOGY

The Homicide Survey has collected police-reported data on homicide incidents, including the characteristics of victims and accused since 1961. Whenever a homicide becomes known to the police, the investigating police department completes a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire remained virtually unchanged from 1961 to 1990. In 1991, in an effort to respond to changing information needs, the survey was revised and expanded.

Note that the homicide “count” for each year reflects the number of homicides “reported” to police in that year, regardless of the date that the homicide actually occurred.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Homicide is **murder** when a person intentionally causes the death of another human being, or means to cause bodily harm that the person knows is likely to cause death.

First degree murder occurs when:

- a) it is planned and deliberate or,
- b) the victim is a person employed and acting in the course of his/her work for the preservation and maintenance of the public peace (e.g., police officer, correctional worker) or,
- c) the death is caused by a person committing or attempting to commit certain serious offences (e.g., sexual assault, kidnapping, hijacking).

Second degree murder is all murder that is not first degree.

Manslaughter is generally considered to be a homicide committed in the heat of passion caused by sudden provocation. It also includes other culpable homicides that are not murders or infanticides.

Infanticide occurs when a female causes the death of her new born child, if her mind is considered disturbed from the effects of giving birth or effects of lactation.

Offence - one offence is counted for each victim of homicide.

Incident - an incident is defined as the occurrence of one (or more) criminal offence(s) during one single, distinct event, regardless of the number of victims. If there are multiple victims or multiple suspects, the offences must occur at the same location and at the same time if they are to be included within the same incident. The incident will normally be lower than the victim (or offence) count due to incidents involving multiple victims.

Table 9



Number of Homicides, 1961-1996


Year	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Yukon	N.W.T.	Canada
1961	1	1	6	2	52	89	15	14	18	34	1	-	233
1962	-	1	10	8	62	76	19	13	18	55	3	-	265
1963	3	-	6	5	69	76	16	8	27	35	3	1	249
1964	5	-	13	5	52	81	16	20	25	32	1	3	253
1965	6	4	10	5	63	77	15	15	20	57	3	2	277
1966	3	1	9	6	56	71	17	12	27	48	-	-	250
1967	1	-	10	5	75	114	15	25	38	47	6	2	338
1968	5	-	9	5	102	104	28	23	25	73	1	-	375
1969	5	1	12	1	126	111	28	33	23	50	-	1	391
1970	1	1	15	8	141	115	29	24	42	78	6	7	467
1971	2	-	16	10	124	151	33	29	45	61	-	2	473
1972	2	2	14	11	157	141	36	28	37	88	3	2	521
1973	3	-	19	17	155	160	38	23	36	87	4	4	546
1974	3	2	8	21	169	160	42	31	44	107	5	8	600
1975	4	-	14	12	226	206	37	36	57	98	6	5	701
1976	6	2	25	14	205	183	31	34	68	88	4	8	668
1977	8	1	14	38	197	192	44	46	70	91	6	4	711
1978	9	4	13	27	180	182	39	32	84	85	2	4	661
1979	5	-	17	11	186	175	44	36	56	90	4	7	631
1980	3	1	12	9	181	158	31	31	55	105	2	4	592
1981	4	1	11	17	186	170	41	29	73	110	1	5	648
1982	6	-	12	13	190	184	35	39	70	109	2	7	667
1983	6	-	13	11	190	202	40	33	75	108	1	3	682
1984	6	-	15	14	198	190	43	30	54	110	2	5	667
1985	5	1	26	14	219	193	26	28	63	113	6	10	704
1986	4	-	15	12	156	139	47	26	64	89	3	14	569
1987	5	-	14	20	174	204	44	30	73	78	-	2	644
1988	7	1	11	8	154	186	31	23	66	80	1	8	576
1989	5	1	16	18	215	175	43	22	67	86	2	7	657
1990	-	1	9	12	184	182	39	36	74	110	1	12	660
1991	11	2	21	17	181	245	42	21	84	128	-	3	755
1992	2	-	21	11	166	242	29	32	92	122	2	13	732
1993	7	2	19	11	159	192	31	30	49	120	-	7	627
1994	4	1	19	15	126	192	29	24	66	113	3	4	596
1995 ^r	5	1	17	14	135	181	27	21	60	120	4	3	588
1996	7	1	18	9	153	187	45	31	53	125	-	4	633
Total	159	33	509	436	5,364	5,686	1,165	968	1,898	3,130	88	171	19,607

- Nil or zero.

^r Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Table 10



Homicide Rates¹, 1961-1996

Year	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Yukon	N.W.T.	Canada
1961	0.22	0.96	0.81	0.33	0.99	1.43	1.63	1.51	1.35	2.09	6.85	0.00	1.28
1962	0.00	0.93	1.38	1.32	1.15	1.20	2.03	1.40	1.31	3.31	20.00	0.00	1.43
1963	0.63	0.00	0.80	0.82	1.26	1.17	1.69	0.86	1.92	2.06	20.00	3.85	1.32
1964	1.04	0.00	1.72	0.82	0.93	1.22	1.67	2.12	1.75	1.83	6.67	11.11	1.31
1965	1.23	3.67	1.32	0.81	1.11	1.13	1.55	1.58	1.38	3.17	21.43	7.41	1.41
1966	0.61	0.92	1.19	0.97	0.97	1.02	1.77	1.26	1.85	2.56	0.00	0.00	1.25
1967	0.20	0.00	1.32	0.81	1.28	1.60	1.56	2.61	2.55	2.42	40.00	6.90	1.66
1968	0.99	0.00	1.17	0.80	1.72	1.43	2.88	2.40	1.64	3.64	6.67	0.00	1.81
1969	0.97	0.90	1.55	0.16	2.11	1.50	2.86	3.44	1.48	2.43	0.00	3.23	1.86
1970	0.19	0.91	1.92	1.28	2.34	1.52	2.95	2.55	2.63	3.67	35.29	21.21	2.19
1971	0.38	0.00	2.00	1.55	2.01	1.92	3.30	3.10	2.69	2.71	0.00	5.45	2.15
1972	0.37	1.76	1.74	1.69	2.53	1.77	3.59	3.03	2.18	3.81	14.78	5.12	2.34
1973	0.55	0.00	2.33	2.58	2.49	1.98	3.76	2.52	2.08	3.66	18.78	9.73	2.42
1974	0.54	1.72	0.98	3.15	2.69	1.95	4.12	3.40	2.50	4.36	23.58	19.32	2.62
1975	0.72	0.00	1.69	1.77	3.56	2.47	3.60	3.91	3.14	3.90	27.27	11.57	3.02
1976	1.06	1.68	2.99	2.02	3.19	2.17	3.00	3.64	3.63	3.46	17.70	17.94	2.84
1977	1.41	0.83	1.66	5.45	3.05	2.25	4.23	4.86	3.58	3.53	26.09	8.89	2.99
1978	1.58	3.28	1.54	3.85	2.78	2.11	3.74	3.35	4.14	3.24	8.37	8.77	2.75
1979	0.88	0.00	2.00	1.56	2.87	2.01	4.23	3.74	2.66	3.36	16.60	15.18	2.60
1980	0.52	0.81	1.40	1.27	2.77	1.80	2.99	3.20	2.50	3.81	8.16	8.57	2.41
1981	0.69	0.81	1.28	2.40	2.83	1.92	3.95	2.96	3.17	3.88	4.15	10.44	2.60
1982	1.04	0.00	1.39	1.83	2.88	2.06	3.34	3.94	2.94	3.78	8.10	14.00	2.65
1983	1.03	0.00	1.49	1.53	2.87	2.23	3.76	3.28	3.13	3.70	4.20	5.83	2.68
1984	1.03	0.00	1.71	1.94	2.98	2.06	4.00	2.95	2.25	3.72	8.30	9.42	2.60
1985	0.86	0.78	2.93	1.93	3.27	2.07	2.40	2.72	2.61	3.78	24.39	18.18	2.71
1986	0.69	0.00	1.68	1.65	2.32	1.47	4.30	2.52	2.62	2.95	12.10	25.27	2.17
1987	0.87	0.00	1.56	2.74	2.56	2.11	4.00	2.89	2.99	2.55	0.00	3.59	2.43
1988	1.21	0.77	1.22	1.09	2.24	1.88	2.81	2.23	2.68	2.56	3.72	14.21	2.14
1989	0.87	0.77	1.76	2.44	3.09	1.72	3.89	2.15	2.68	2.68	7.30	12.17	2.40
1990	0.00	0.76	0.99	1.62	2.62	1.76	3.52	3.56	2.89	3.33	3.57	20.20	2.37
1991	1.90	1.53	2.29	2.27	2.56	2.34	3.78	2.09	3.23	3.79	0.00	4.89	2.68
1992	0.34	0.00	2.27	1.46	2.32	2.27	2.59	3.17	3.47	3.51	6.60	20.77	2.56
1993 ^f	1.20	1.50	2.04	1.46	2.20	1.78	2.76	2.97	1.82	3.36	0.00	10.99	2.17
1994 ^f	0.69	0.74	2.03	1.98	1.73	1.76	2.57	2.37	2.43	3.08	10.10	6.18	2.04
1995 ^f	0.87	0.74	1.81	1.84	1.84	1.63	2.38	2.07	2.18	3.19	13.20	4.56	1.99
1996	1.23	0.73	1.91	1.18	2.07	1.66	3.94	3.03	1.90	3.24	0.00	6.01	2.11

¹ Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population.

² Estimates of population used:

1961-1990: (IR) Revised intercensal estimates

1991-1992: (PD) Final postcensal estimates

1993-1995: (PR) Updated postcensal estimates

1996: (PP) Preliminary postcensal estimates

As of 1971, population estimates were adjusted to reflect new methods of calculation.

^f Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1997.

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

For further information, please contact the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 19th floor, R.H. Coats Building, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6 at **(613) 951-9023** or call **toll-free 1 800 387-2231**. To order a publication, you may telephone (613) 951-7277 or fax (613) 951-1584 or internet: order@statcan.ca. You may also call 1 800 267-6677 (Canada and United States) toll-free. If you order by telephone, written confirmation is not required.

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