Corporate Policy and Programs Sector

Research Section



Sexual Assault Legislation in Canada An Evaluation

Homicide and Sexual Assault

Report No. 7



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IN CANADA

AN EVALUATION

HOMICIDE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Report No. 7

Julian V. Roberts and Michelle G. Grossman

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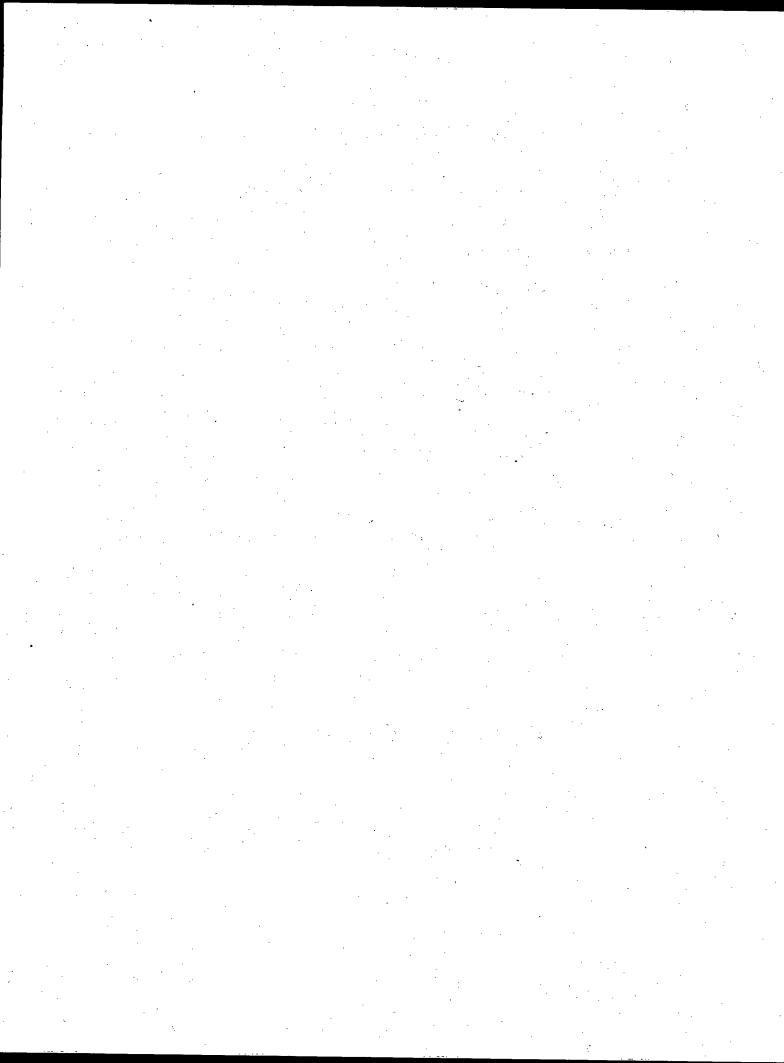
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HIGHLIGHTS

- * This study examined the incidence and nature of sexual homicide, defined by Statistics Canada as homicide committed during the commission of a sexual assault.
- * The principal source of data examined was the homicide return form (see Appendix C) completed by police forces across the country and submitted to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (located in Statistics Canada).
- * For most analyses reported, the period covered was 1974-1986.
- * Over this period, the vast majority of all homicide victims were male, but the majority of sexual homicide victims were female.
- * For 1989 (the most recent year for which data are available), three percent of all homicides occurred during the commission of a sexual assault. Ten percent of all homicides were committed during the commission of other offences (e.g., robbery, breaking and entering, theft).
- * There has been no change in the annual number of sexual homicides. In 1974, there were 22 sexual homicide victims across Canada and almost exactly the same number (21) in 1989.
- * The three most populous provinces (Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec) accounted for three quarters of sexual homicides recorded during the period studied.
- * Eighty-five percent of sexual homicide victims were female. This contrasts with the gender profile of all homicides, where only one third of victims were female, but is consistent with the victim profile for sexual assault. Approximately 90 percent of sexual assault victims are female.
- * There has been no change in the gender ratio of sexual homicide victims since 1961.
- * There has been a change in the age of victims. In the period 1961-1970, only one victim in five was under 21 years of age; in the period 1971-1986, this age category accounted for half of all sexual homicide victims.
- * More than two-thirds of sexual homicide victims were single; only 36 percent of other homicide victims were single.
- * Three quarters of the sexual homicide cases were cleared by the laying of a charge. This is comparable to the "cleared by charge" rate for other forms of homicide.

- * The suspect was a stranger to the victim in 30 percent of the sexual homicide cases studied. This is substantially higher than the percentage of all homicides that involve strangers.
- * The category "acquaintance" accounted for the highest percentage of cases (one in three).
- * Over the period studied, the suspect was also the husband of the victim in only one case out of 405.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 1985, the Department of Justice Canada initiated a series of research studies in the area of sexual assault. This report is the last to be undertaken in the series. It is a summary of data collected for the Department of Justice two years ago. The sexual assault research initiative in the Department of Justice Canada was a direct response to two concerns. First was a desire to evaluate the impact of the 1983 reform legislation (Bill C-127) in which the offences of rape and indecent assault (male and female) were replaced by three new offences of sexual assault. (For descriptions of the new legislation see Watt, 1986; Begin, 1987; Department of Justice, 1991). This legislation was part of a radical reform of the law governing crimes of sexual aggression. Similar reform legislation had been introduced in many states in America (e.g., Michigan, see Marsh, Geist and Caplan, 1982;, Washington, see Loh, 1980; 1981). The Department of Justice Canada recognized the importance of legislative evaluation in this area. Sound empirical data are essential to gaining an understanding of the impact of the 1983 reforms. Data are also necessary to point the way towards further reform of both the legislation and the way in which the legislation is implemented by the Canadian criminal justice system. (For a summary of the findings from the sexual assault initiative, see Research Section, Department of Justice, 1991).

The second reason for research into sexual assault and the criminal justice system's response to those crimes, is the growing awareness of the threat to women that exists in contemporary Canadian society. It is only within the last ten years that the magnitude of the problem has been fully appreciated. Awareness of the widespread incidence of crimes of violence against women, and the publicity surrounding the tragic killings in Montreal in 1989, have brought the attention of the public (and the news media) to violent crime in which the majority of victims are female. As part of the sexual assault initiative, the Department of Justice Canada commissioned several reports on the incidence of these crimes (see Appendix A for a complete list of reports available from the Department).

This report examines homicides committed in the course of sexual assault. The reason for studying sexual homicide within the framework of the sexual assault initiative is that in both cases the vast majority of victims are female.

Unlike other reports pertaining to sexual assault and commissioned by the Department of Justice Canada, the present report does not concentrate on the effects of the 1983 legislation. Bill C-127 did not directly address the issue of homicides taking place as a result of, or during, a sexual assault. The issue of reporting --central to rape reform legislation -- is not as important for homicide, where almost all incidents are eventually brought to the attention of the police. Rather, this report provides descriptive data on the incidence and nature of this category of homicide. While the period studied encompasses the change in legislation, it was not anticipated that the introduction of Bill C-127 would have an impact on the number or nature of incidents of homicide arising from sexual assault (or in the pre-1983 period, from rape or indecent assault). At this point a brief summary of the Criminal Code offences relevant to the discussion will be provided.

1.2 Sexual Assault and Homicide

(a) Sexual Assault

The 1983 sexual assault legislation (Bill C-127) replaced the earlier offences of rape, attempted rape and indecent assault against a male or a female, with three new offences of sexual assault. These are:

- Section 271: Sexual Assault (maximum penalty: ten years imprisonment; hereafter referred to as level I in this report).
- Section 272: Sexual Assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm (maximum penalty: 14 years imprisonment; level II).
- Section 273: Aggravated Sexual Assault (maximum penalty: life imprisonment; level III).

(b) Homicide

The homicide category employed by Statistics Canada includes the following crimes:

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Section 231: First degree murder

Section 231 (7): Second degree murder

Section 234: An analysis of Manslaughter and the second and the second s

Section 233: An advanced to the administration of the section of t

The maximum penalty for infanticide is five years imprisonment; for all the other forms of homicide it is life imprisonment, although the parole ineligibility periods vary.

(c) Sexual Homicide

Some homicides are classified as occurring "during the commission of another offence." The nature of the other offence determines whether the homicide will result in a charge of first or second degree murder. To quote the relevant section of the Criminal Code:

Irrespective of whether a murder is planned and deliberate on the part of any person, murder is first degree murder in respect of a person when the death is caused by that person while committing or attempting to commit an offence under one of the following sections:

- (a) section 76 (hijacking an aircraft);
- (b) section 271 (sexual assault);
- (c) section 272 (sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm);
- (d) section 273 (aggravated sexual assault);
- (e) section 279 (kidnapping and forcible confinement); or
- (f) section 279.1 (hostage taking).

Thus all cases of homicide taking place in the course of a sexual assault should result in charges of first degree murder.

Sexual assault homicide is a category of homicide contained in the "homicide return form", completed by investigating officers and submitted to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. (More will be said about the database later in this report.)

For the sake of brevity, the category sexual assault homicide used in this report will be called sexual homicide. The category of sexual homicide provided to the authors includes homicides where "the circumstances involve another breach of the <u>Criminal Code</u>" (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1989); in this case the breach involved rape, indecent assault or sexual assault. This is a narrow definition of homicide in which the motive was sexual. The definition is of course critical; the wider the definition, the larger the number of sexual homicides recorded. This point will be addressed further in this report.

1.2.1 Public perceptions of crime seriousness

Although the <u>Criminal Code</u> distinguishes between various kinds of homicide (murder; manslaughter; infanticide) there is little codified differentiation in terms of offence seriousness. Most homicide offences carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. However, it is clear that homicides involving sexual assaults (or murder-rapes as they are referred to in the United States) constitute one of the most serious offences in the <u>Criminal Code</u>, at least in terms of public perceptions. Evidence for this comes from the most systematic public survey of crime seriousness in North America that was carried out in 1977 (Wolfgang, Figlio, Tracy and Singer, 1985). (The literature on perceptions of crime seriousness has shown great similarities between Canadians and Americans in terms of perceptions of seriousness; accordingly it is unlikely that the pattern would be different for a sample of Canadians.) Over 60,000 respondents were asked to rate the seriousness of over 200 crimes. The least serious offence in the eyes of the public was truancy. It received a scale score of .02. The offence receiving the highest ratings of seriousness was described in the following way:

"A person plants a bomb in a public building and 20 people are killed."

It received a scale score of 72.1. The <u>second</u> highest rating of seriousness was assigned to homicide involving a sexual assault (it received a scale score of 52.8). The offence examined in this report then, is one which although statistically rare, is perceived to be more serious than almost any other, and which in all probability generates a great deal of public concern.¹

1.3 Databases Used in the Report

The principal source of information used in the preparation of this report was the Homicide Database maintained by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) at Statistics Canada. This database draws upon information routinely collected by law enforcement agencies across Canada and provided to Statistics Canada on a special form known as the "homicide return". As can be seen in Appendix B, the form contains information relating to the circumstances of the offence, characteristics of the victim(s) and suspect(s), as well as information relating to the criminal justice response; e.g., the nature of the charges laid and so forth (see Statistics Canada, 1989, Appendix II for further information on the Homicide

It is noteworthy that the most notorious murderers in history were individuals who committed sexually related murders (e.g., Christie, Speck, Gacy, Sutcliffe). As well, the homicides receiving the most news media coverage in Canada recently (e.g., Stanton) were cases of sexual homicide.

Database.) The fact that data are collected on a separate form suggests that more is known about homicide than any other offence category. If the form is completed in its entirety, it provides a detailed record of each homicide that has been recorded by the police in Canada.

Data from this source form the basis of such CCJS annual publications as Homicide in Canada: A Statistical Perspective. Since publication of this annual recently ceased, the homicide database now results in <u>User Reports</u> known as <u>Juristats</u>. Both types of publications have been employed in the course of writing this report. As well, several independent special data requests were made by the Department of Justice Canada to Client Services in the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Finally, it should be noted that the analyses reported here include the data provided by the Department of Justice to the authors of this report. In addition to these tables, one of the authors conducted an examination of the actual homicide returns in the category of sexual homicide.

1.3.1 Time period covered by the analyses

Most of the analyses reported here are based upon data collected between 1974 and 1986, which was provided to the Department of Justice by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. A subsequent data request produced some additional data up to and including 1989.

One final note about the database concerns the terminology. The exact classification used by Statistics Canada is "homicide during the commission of sexual assault." Throughout this report, the general term "sexual homicide" will be used.²

² The definition of sexual homicide adopted in this report is the Statistics Canada definition of homicide occurring during the commission of a sexual assault. This is a fairly narrow definition; some other countries employ a broader definition. Indeed, some writers would suggest that any homicide in which the victim was killed on account of his or her gender should be considered a case of "sexual homicide." The issue turns upon the question of whether "sexual" connotes sexual activity, or at least the intent to engage in some form of sexual activity, or something broader, as in "gender based." The second, broader definition would lead to the inclusion of a far larger number of homicides within the category of sexual homicide. In the absence of any other widely-accepted definition (and because the data are classified in this way), we have used the Statistics Canada definition.

1.3.2 Methodological issues surrounding the homicide database

Before describing the findings, we shall address the issue of coverage: does this database capture all cases of sexual homicide? It is important to have an accurate estimate of the true incidence because identification of high risk sex offenders will only occur when the criminal justice system knows as much as it can about individuals who are currently imprisoned for the offence. Does the homicide database classification of homicide during the commission of a sexual assault catch <u>all</u> the incidents where sexual aggression was the motive or cause of the homicide? Two potential problems suggest that the statistics of sexually-motivated assault underestimate the true incidence of crimes of this nature.

The homicide offences are among the most well-reported offences in the Criminal Code. In fact, aside from contract and gang-land killings, in which frequent attempts are made to conceal the deceased, it is likely that almost all homicides are reported to, or come to the attention of the police. (Cases of infanticide, which also tend to be more difficult to detect, account for less than one percent, of all homicide statistics (Statistics Canada, 1989). The so-called "dark figure" in crime statistics — the percentage of cases that escape the attention of the police — is therefore relatively low in the case of homicide (Koenig, 1987). Unlike such other crimes as sexual assault (which are affected by public attitudes towards reporting to the police), the picture of homicide based on official statistics, in all probability, closely corresponds to the true number of homicides committed.

However, while the statistical trends for homicide may be relatively uninfluenced by social factors or administrative decisions, the classification of certain variables contained on the homicide return form can be controversial. The motivation for the crime is not always apparent, and identifying the motive may challenge the investigator's imagination and powers of deduction. The instructions accompanying the homicide return simply require the investigating officers to indicate (if possible) the motive for the crime. These categories may be inadequate with respect to the difficult task of determining motive.

³ In terms of missing persons, it is worth noting that the vast majority of cases do not involve a homicide. On average, the missing person is located soon after disappearing. Thus, in a recent study of missing children, over 98 percent of the children were located within a month of disappearing (Fisher, 1989).

Motive Categories on the Canadian Homicide Return

The homicide return in use until January 1991, and subsequently revised, contained 12 categories of motive: revenge; jealousy; anger; argument; robbery, theft and breaking and entering (all one category); sexual assault or rape (including indecent assault); self defence; escape (from custody); the commission of an offence other than theft, breaking and entering, robbery, indecent assault, rape, attempted rape or sexual assault (e.g., kidnapping, abortion, arson); inadvertant act; other motives; mentally ill. There is also a catch-all category, "not known." Clearly the categories listed above are very subjective, and also suffer from the defect that they are not entirely discrete: jealousy can provoke an argument which may result in an assault leading to a homicide. Into which category should such a homicide be placed? As well, motives that are clearly disparate (e.g., homicides committed in the course of all crimes other than those listed above) are lumped together in one motive category "during the commission of other offences." This then was the form used during the period covered by this study. Since January 1991, a revised homicide return form has been adopted by CCJS and circulated to police forces across the country. The new form contains separate sections for "precipitating crimes" and "apparent motive." As such, it is an improvement over the earlier version, although, as will be seen, it still contains only a fraction of the information collected on comparable forms used in the United States.

For some incidents, the motive will be clear and supported by evidence from the scene of the crime. For others, motivation will only be established after considerable investigation. The presence of a sexual assault may only be determined by forensic tests. In some cases, sexual assault may have been the motive for the incident giving rise to the homicide, but direct evidence may be lacking. For example, when a known prostitute becomes a murder victim, the motivation may be unclear, and forensic tests might not be definitive in classifying the murder, even if they are conducted. Whether some form of coerced sexuality preceded the homicide is unlikely to be known, or even investigated by the police. As well, it is possible that sexual assault or some gender related motive was behind the killing, but there was no physical evidence of this fact. In such a case the homicide would not be classified as a "homicide occurring during the commission of sexual assault," but rather as another kind of homicide.

The occurrence of multiple offences may also lead to the misclassification of sexually related homicides as other types of homicide. In some cases, a homicide takes place following or during the commission of several other offences, sexual assault included. In these circumstances, the police usually classify the most serious other offence as the one that gave rise to the homicide. If sexual assault is one of the other offences, the case will likely be classified as a sexual assault homicide. However, if in some instances evidence is more compelling for another offence (e.g.,

breaking and entering), then the incident may be classified as a homicide occurring during the commission of that offence.

To summarize, there are grounds to believe that the statistics for sexual homicide may underestimate the true incidence of the crime.

1.4 Aims of Report

To summarize, this report presents recent descriptive data on the incidence and patterns of sexual homicide. The purpose is to characterize the incidents in terms of variables such as the gender and age of the victim and suspect, and the relationship between the victim and the suspect, and to answer some basic questions about sexual homicide in Canada over the past 15 years. It is important to point out that the researchers were restricted to the few items appearing on the old homicide return form (See Appendix B). More in-depth research would require an analysis of the incidents based upon case histories. This kind of information was not available to the authors.

Comparisons will be made between sexual homicides, homicides committed during the course of other offences (e.g., breaking and entering) and all homicides. Such comparisons shed light upon the nature of the various types of homicide. Specific comparisons will not be made between sexual homicide prior to the rape reform legislation of 1983 and sexual homicide after the reforms. As noted above, the legislation was not directed towards the crime of sexual homicide, and there is no reason to assume that the incidence of sexual homicide should have changed from one time period to another.

1.5 Previous Research on Sexual Homicide

While there are extensive research and clinical literatures on both rape and homicide, there has not been a great deal published on the topic of the overlap between the two offences.

1.6 Incidence of Sexual Homicide

Little research has been conducted concerning sexual violence resulting in homicide, although it has been estimated that one out of every ten female murder victims in the United States is killed during a rape or other sexual offence (Chappell, 1989).

(a) United States

The difficulty of estimating (with any accuracy) the incidence of sexual homicide is reflected in the highly variable estimates that emerge from a survey of the literature. The estimate provided by Chappell (1989) echoes an earlier writer, who noted: "Out of every ten female murder victims in the United States, one is killed during rape or other sexual offences" (Russell, 1984: p. 67). These estimates however are at odds with others. Selkin (1975), for example, estimated the rate to be one in 140. Most researchers in the field lean towards the view that cases of sexual homicide represent a much smaller percentage than ten percent. Katz and Mazur (1976) noted:

[a]lthough rape and murder have occurred simultaneously, the phenomenon is relatively rare (p.164).

Hayman, Lanza, Fuentes and Algor (1978), for example, found that seven out of their total sample of 1,223 homicides also involved a rape. In his landmark study in the area, Amir (1971) found that only one out of 646 homicides was associated with rape. Similar proportions were found by MacDonald (1971), Bornstein (1963), and Svalastoga (1962).

Brownmiller (1975) acknowledged the weakness of the data on sexual homicide in the United States when she wrote:

There are no available national figures on the yearly number of rape murders because the act is treated as a homicide by most police departments (p. 97). And further:

Playing around with numbers, purely speculatively, if rape murder accounts for two percent of all murders (the outside possibility) there are perhaps 400 rape murders committed per year. This would amount to .8 percent of all reported rapes and .2 percent of all actual rapes and rape attempts (p. 198).

Another United States study (Falk, 1990) notes that rape murders constitute only a small percentage of murders "discovered to have taken place in the 40-year period ending in 1983" (p. 8). The most recent survey from the United States suggests a somewhat higher figure. The national homicide survey conducted by the FBI (1989) reports that one percent of murders in America also involved sex offences. Once again, however, there may be definitional differences between this figure and Brownmiller's estimate.

To summarize the United States data, it appears that there is considerable variance in estimates of the incidence of sexual homicide but most studies suggest that only a very small percentage of all homicides fall into the category of sexual homicide.

(b) Canada

In Canada, an earlier study of homicides occurring between 1961 and 1970, found that 17 percent of murders occurred "during the commission of other criminal acts" (Schloss, 1972). Of this 17 percent, two-thirds were accounted for by robbery, and one-quarter by rape or indecent assault.

Much of the remaining literature on sexual homicide consists of clinical case histories of convicted murderers (e.g., Brittain, 1970, MacDonald, 1971, Schlesinger and Revitch, 1990). While they may shed light on individual cases, they do not tell us a great deal about the incidence of sexual homicide. For the reader who wishes to know more about the phenomenon of sexual homicide, Appendix C contains a list of some relevant references in the area.

2.0 FINDINGS

2.1 Homicide: General Findings

Before examining data involving sexual homicide, some recent trends for homicide in general will be presented. In 1989, 657 homicides were recorded across Canada. This converts to a rate of 2.51 per 100,000 residents, which represents a slight decrease in comparison to the average rate over the previous ten years (Statistics Canada, 1990b). The homicide rate in Canada is considerably lower than the homicide rate in the United States. The highest murder rate in 1989 was recorded in Montreal, followed by Edmonton, Winnipeg and Vancouver. In four homicides out of five, the victim was known or related to the suspect.

2.1.1 Homicide and gender

As Silverman and Mukherjee (1987) note:

When research has explored gender and homicide, it has been found that homicide is a male-dominated act. Both victims and offenders are most often males (p.38).

In fact, the proportion of female homicide victims has declined slightly over the past 20 years. During the period 1961-1971, 40 percent of victims were female; since then the percentage has declined to 35 percent (Statistics Canada, 1990b). A recent survey of homicide in Canada notes that 14,358 incidents of homicide were reported to, or otherwise came to the attention of the police over the period 1961-1988. Of this number, almost two-thirds (64 percent) of the victims were male (Statistics Canada, 1990). In 1988, the percentage of victims who were male rose slightly. However, these trends mask gender related differences in terms of the relationship between the victim and the suspect. Almost 60 percent of female homicide victims were killed by someone with whom they shared a domestic relationship of some kind. On the other hand, only one-quarter of males were killed by someone in this category. The comparison becomes even clearer when examining homicides involving the suspect's spouse. In 1988, 70 women were killed by their spouse⁴, 21 men were killed by their spouse, a ratio of approximately three to one. A similar pattern emerges from the period 1974-1989: 1,259 women were killed by their husbands while 389 men were killed by their wives (a ratio of 3.2 to one).

⁴ Includes common-law spouse.

These victim-offender patterns are reflected in the statistics describing the location of the incidents. In light of the fact that women are more likely (than men) to be killed by someone with whom they shared a domestic relationship, it is not surprising that they were more likely to be killed at home than elsewhere: almost two-thirds of the female victims were killed at home compared to 42 percent of the male victims. Considering all homicides taking place in the victim's residence, female victims outnumber male victims. However, when examining homicides taking place in other locations, male victims outnumber females.

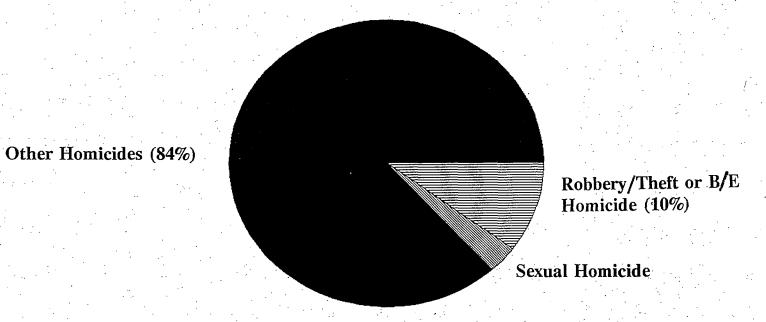
In general then, it can be said that while the overall homicide rate reflects a preponderance of male victims, this trend is reversed when examining the victims of domestic homicides.

2.2 Incidence of Sexual Homicide

2.2.1 Sexual homicide over time

(a) 1989

Of the 657 homicides recorded in Canada in 1989, 21 cases or three percent were classified as sexual homicides and a further 10 percent occurred during the commission of a robbery, theft or breaking and entering. Thus, sexual homicides represent a small percentage of all homicides recorded by the police (see Figure 1).



1 n = 657

2 Source: Statistics Canada

(b) 1974-1986

Figure 2 presents a more detailed distribution of types of homicide, this time from 1974 to 1986. This figure confirms that sexual homicides account for a small percentage of all homicides recorded, although a slightly higher percentage (4 percent) than that found in the 1989 data (3 percent). This figure also raises the question of whether the sexual homicide statistics underestimate the actual number of sexual homicides taking place. Fully 11 percent, or more than 800 homicides from 1974 to 1986 were unclassifiable, or of unknown motivation. Some of these were presumably sexually related, although it is impossible (without further research) to know exactly how many.

The percentage of sexual homicides has remained stable over the 15-year period (1974-1986). In 1974, of the 600 homicides recorded, 22 (four percent) were sexual in nature. Over the entire period, 12,129 homicides were recorded and fewer than four percent (461) were classified in the sexual category.

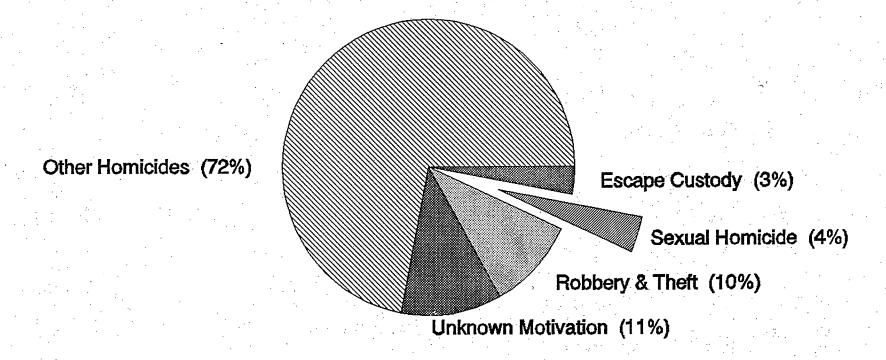
In the first four-year period included in the database (1974-1977) there was an average of 20 sexual homicide victims per year. In the most recent four-year period, (1986-1989) the yearly average was 21.

2.2.2 Sexual homicide as a percentage of sexual assaults

In 1989, there were 31,756 reports of sexual assault (level I, II and III combined) in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1990a). Expressing the number of sexual homicides (21) as a percentage of the total number of sexual assault reports therefore generates a percentage well under one percent.

Thus there has been no increase in the proportion of homicides officially classified as sexual homicide. Nor has there been a significant increase in the actual number of sexual homicide victims over the 15-year period.

Figure 2 Homicides in Canada by Recorded Motive (1974-1986)¹



¹ Source: Statistics Canada (1987)

2.3 Characteristics of Sexual Homicide

2.3.1 Geographical distribution

Not surprisingly, most incidents of homicide took place in the three most populous provinces, and this pattern is evident for sexual homicide as well. Of all such homicides recorded over the period 1974-1986, three-quarters were in Ontario (28 percent of the total); British Columbia (26 percent) and Quebec (19 percent) (See Table 1). There was considerable province-to-province variation: Prince Edward Island recorded no sexual homicides during the entire period (see Table 1).

Turning to homicides committed during robbery, theft or breaking and entering, we find a different pattern: 40 percent of this category of homicide occurred in Quebec, only 25 percent in Ontario and 16 percent in British Columbia. This can be explained in part at least by the high rate of armed robbery in Quebec (see Gabor et al., 1987).

It is interesting to note that the number of sexual homicides does not correlate particularly well with the rates of sexual assault. The rates of sexual assault are very high in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories⁵ (over ten times the rate in Quebec; see Roberts, 1990) and yet few sexual homicides were recorded in these areas.

⁵ It should be noted that while the <u>rates</u> of sexual assault are high in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, the actual numbers of reports are low. This is explained by the relatively small populations of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Thus in 1988, there were only 86 reports of sexual assault in the Yukon, and 309 in the Northwest territories. This compares to almost 4,000 in Quebec and almost 10,000 in Ontario (Research Section, Department of Justice Canada, 1991).

Table 1 Sexual Homicide, Canada (1974-1986)¹

LOCATION	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS	% OF TOTAL
Ontario	84	28
British Columbia	79	26
Quebec	57	19
Alberta	37	12
Manitoba	16	5.25
Nova Scotia	10	3
Saskatchewan	8	3
Newfoundland	6	2
New Brunswick	5	2
NWT/Yukon	3	<1
Prince Edward Island	0	0 : .
CANADA TOTAL	305	100

¹ Source: Statistics Canada (1987).

2.3.2 Victims: Gender and age

Of all sexual homicide victims (1974-1986), 85 percent were female. In terms of gender, sexual homicide generates a victim profile very different from homicide victims in general, almost two-thirds of whom are male. The profile of sexual homicide victims more closely resembles the profile of sexual assault victims, of whom approximately 90 percent are female. The gender ratio for sexual homicide has remained relatively constant since 1961. In the period 1961-1970, 82 percent of victims of sexual homicide were female (Schloss, 1972).

Table 2 presents a summary of the age patterns of victims. It is interesting to note that almost half (49 percent) of the victims during the period 1974-1986 were under age 21.

While the incidence of sexual homicide may not have changed, there has been a significant change in the age of the victims. Schloss (1972) found that in the period 1961 to 1970, only 20 percent of the victims of homicide committed in the course of rape were under age 21. However, the comparable statistic is now 49 percent (Table 2).

Table 3 shows which age and sex combinations account for the highest percentage of cases. Thus while one-quarter of the victims aged one to 15 were male, only five percent of the victims in the 16 to 25 age group were male.

The age profile of sexual homicide victims is also different from the age profile of homicide victims in general who on average are older. Thus while 69 percent of sexual homicide victims were between one and 30 years, 50 percent of homicide victims, excluding those committed during the course of another criminal act, were in this age category (Statistics Canada, 1987).

Table 2 Age of Victim by Type of Homicide Committed, Canada, (1974-1986)¹

		SEXUAL	номі	CIDE ²	ROBB	ERY/THEFT	∀B&E³
AGE ·			(%)			(%)	
1-10			12			<1	
11-20		***	37			6	
21-30			20			16	
31-40	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		13			15	
41-50		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	6			17	;
51-60			6	• •		17	* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
61+			7			29	
			100			100	

¹ Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

 $^{^{2}}$ n=305.

 $^{^{3}}$ n=859.

Table 3 Age and Gender of Sexual Homicide Victims, Canada (1974-1986)¹

	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
CATEGORY	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 - 15	65	76	20	. 24	85	/100%
16 - 25	95	95	5	5	100	/100%
26 - 35	48	94	3	6	51	/100%
36 - 45	18	72	4	18	22	/100%
46 - 55	15	71	6	29	21	/100%
55 +	<u>18</u>	64	<u>10</u>	36	28	/100%
TOTAL	259		48		307	

¹ Source: Statistics Canada (1987)

2.3.3 Comparison between sexual homicide, and homicide in the commission of other crimes

It is instructive to compare the victim age and gender distribution for sexual homicide with the distribution for homicides occurring during the commission of other crimes, namely: robbery, theft and breaking and entering. For this other category the gender ratio is reversed: 79 percent of victims were male, 21 percent female (see Figure 3). There is also a different pattern in the age of the victims. While approximately half the victims of sexual homicide were age 20 or under, less than 10 percent of the victims of homicide committed in the commission of other offences were in this age category. The distributions are compared in Figure 4. A breakdown is provided in Table 2.

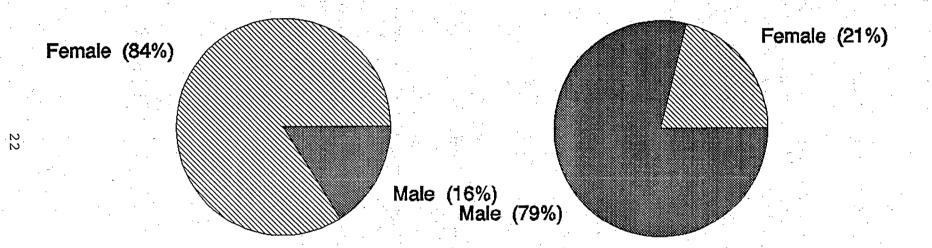
These differences make it clear that for sexual homicide, the age category most frequently victimized is the 20 and under group, while for homicides committed in connection with other crimes such as breaking and entering, persons over age 61 are most frequently victimized.

2.3.4 Marital status of victims

Over two-thirds (68 percent) of the sexual homicide victims were single. A further 16 percent were married⁶, 11 percent were separated or divorced while four percent were widowed. Differences emerge between sexual homicide and homicide committed during the course of offences such as robbery. Only 36 percent of robbery homicide victims were single (compared to 68 percent for sexual homicide). Fully 37 percent of robbery homicide victims were married, in contrast to 16 percent of sexual homicide victims. These data are presented graphically in Figure 5. Marital status then is an important factor differentiating the two homicide victim populations. Differences also emerge between sexual homicide victims and homicide victims in general: the latter are significantly more likely to be married. (Clearly this may be related to the fact that they are more likely to be older).

⁶ This includes common-law spouses.

ROBBERY, THEFT, B&E²

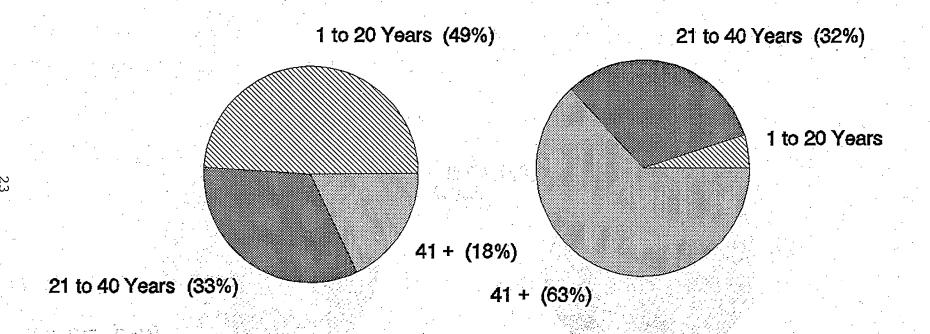


- 1 Source: Statistics Canada (1987)
- 2 Homicide occurring during the commission of one of these offences



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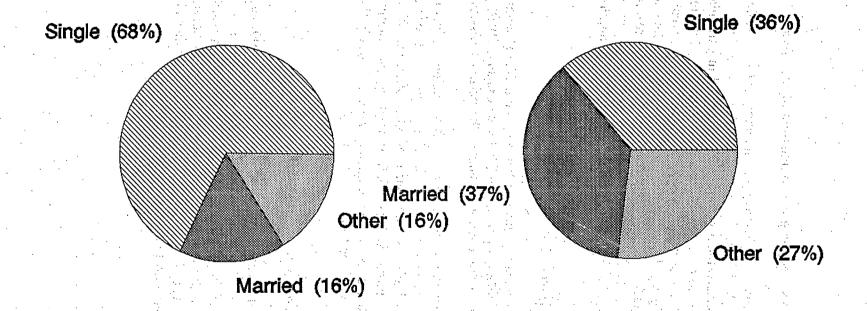


- 1 Source: Statistics Canada (1987)
- Homicide occurring during the commission of one of these offences

Figure 5 Victim Marital Status in Homicide (1974-1986)¹

SEXUAL HOMICIDE

ROBBERY, THEFT, B&E²



- 1 Source: Statistics Canada (1987)
- 2 Homicide occurring during the commission of one of these offences

Other = divorced, separated or widowed

2.3.5 Circumstances surrounding the commission of the offence

Alcohol and other drug use is a precipitating and aggravating factor in many crimes. Research in the United States, for example, shows that almost half the convicted offenders incarcerated for violent crimes, and in particular assaults, used alcohol immediately before committing their crimes (Adler, Mueller and Laufer, 1991). Alcohol or drugs were present in one-quarter of the sexual homicide incidents. This is slightly (but not significantly) higher than the comparable statistic for homicides committed in the course of robbery, theft and breaking and entering. It is also somewhat lower than the percentage for all homicides: over the period 1987-1988, one-third of homicides involved drugs or alcohol consumption.

2.3.6 Sexual homicide and Aboriginal Canadians

Aboriginal Canadians (Canadian Indians, Inuit, Métis) comprise fewer than three percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 1989) yet they accounted for 15 percent of sexual homicide victims over the period 1974-1986.

This is quite similar to the percentage of homicide victims in general that are natives (18 percent). There is, however, a clear contrast between sexual homicides and homicides that take place in the course of other offences. If we examine homicides committed during robbery, theft or breaking and entering (the major category of other offences related to homicide) we see that only three percent of the victims were Aboriginal Canadians.

2.3.7 Sexual homicide suspects: gender and age

Little variation exists for the gender of the suspect: 99 percent of all sexual homicide suspects over the 15-year period were male. In terms of age, half of the suspects were between 16- and 25-years- old. This pattern is consistent with the age distribution of suspects for homicide in general, and also for homicide committed during robbery, theft and breaking and entering. Young adult males are considerably over-represented relative to the population.

2.3.8 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal suspects the substantial suspects and substantial and non-Aboriginal suspects the substantial substantial suspects and substantial substantial suspects and substantial substa

Fifteen percent of suspects in cases of sexual homicide over the 15-year period were Aboriginal Canadians. This is close to, but slightly less than, the percentage of all-homicide suspects that are native Canadians (22 percent -- Statistics Canada, 1989). In 14 percent of homicides committed during the course of robbery, theft or breaking and entering, the suspects were Aboriginal Canadians.

2.3.9 Method of killing

Table 4 shows differences between methods of killing used for male and female victims of sexual homicides and homicides in general. As can be seen, strangulation is the more frequent method in sexual homicides for female victims. Isolating robbery, theft and break and enter homicides, we find that in almost one-third of cases, the homicide was committed with a firearm. This is consistent with the pattern for all homicides, 29 percent of which were committed using a firearm. The fact that relatively few sexual homicides involve a firearm is important as it suggests that whatever crime prevention benefits may accrue from more restrictive gun control legislation, such legislation is unlikely to substantially reduce the number of sexual homicides.

2.4 Location of Sexual Homicide

In ten percent of the incidents of sexual homicide recorded, the exact location of the incident was unknown. Table 5 provides data on the principal categories of location for the remaining incidents. Incidents were evenly divided between the victim's residence and a public location (37 percent and 38 percent, respectively). There were few gender differences: male victims were slightly more likely to be killed in their own residence than were female victims (43 percent versus 35 percent).

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Table 4 Homicide in Canada: Method of Killing, by Sex of Victim¹

	SEXUAL HC (1974-19		ALL HOMICIDES ² (1988)			
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE		
METHOD	%	%	%	%		
Shooting	4	4	33	23		
Beating	31	23	23	26		
Stabbing	35	24	32	24		
Strangulation	25	34	a de varia de la como	8 18 4 1 4		
Other Method	_5	<u>15</u>	_9	<u>13</u>		
	100	100	100	100		
Number of Cases	48	257	373	202		

Source: Statistics Canada (1987).

Source: Statistics Canada (1989).

Table 5 Location of Sexual Homicide Incidents, Canada (1974-1986)¹

va toa woosyt ii 🗀	a diktera del	Patrice William	%)	
Victim's Residence	92		3	37	
Suspect's Residence	28		1	1	
Other Residence	36		1	4	
Public Location	<u>.94</u>		<u>.</u>	<u>88</u>	
	250		10	00	

¹ Source: Statistics Canada (1987).

2.4.1 Relationship between suspect and victim

A critical issue in the commission of criminal violence is the nature of the relationship between the victim and the suspect. A breakdown of the status of the suspect is presented in Table 6. Before considering these data, a few words are in order about the form from which these are derived. These data refer to the period 1974 to 1990 (slightly different from the period covered by the other tables in this report); they were coded by one of the authors of this report especially for this project. Although the categories may be conceptually clear, it is not always clear which category is relevant in any particular case. There were two sources of information for the classification: the homicide return itself, and newspaper file containing reports about the homicide. This latter source proved to be useful, providing on occasion a great deal more information on the case than the brief information contained on the homicide return. The newspaper reports were therefore useful in clarifying cases that on the basis of the homicide return at least, were ambiguous. For example, on some occasions there was evidence of both robbery and sexual assault.

On some occasions the two data sources were in conflict. For example, in some cases the later newspaper reports indicated that sexual assault had been ruled out as a motive, whereas the homicide return itself coded the incident as a sexual homicide. In such cases we have followed the classification used on the homicide return. A second difficulty arises in that the distinction between some categories is not that clear on the homicide return form: when does an acquaintance become a friend? If the suspect met and came to know the victim at work, does this mean he was a business associate (the term employed by Statistics Canada) or an acquaintance? Sexual homicides involving known prostitutes were recorded as "business associate," although clearly this is a unique form of business association. Finally, we note that the stranger category may mask a number of acquaintance cases. In some cases it was apparent from the circumstances preceding the homicide that the suspect had some knowledge of the victim, and may well have been an acquaintance, although the case was not classified as such because there was no direct evidence that the victim had in fact known the suspect.⁸

⁷ Unfortunately, CCJS discontinued the practice of attaching newspaper clippings to the homicide database in the 1980s.

⁸ These points are made not to criticize the categories used by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (no coding scheme can be both simple and flexible enough to make fine distinctions at the same time), but rather to caution the reader about the difficulties of classifying cases along what may seem like a straightforward dimension.

<u>Table 6</u> Relationship between Victim and Suspects, Sexual Homicide in Canada (1974-1990)¹

SUSPECT WAS:		N		<u>%</u>	
Husband	1. 255	1		< 1	
Parent	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	3		< 1	
Son	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	2		< 1	
Sibling		4		-1	
Other Relation		11		3	
Friend		17	1	4	
Acquaintance		133		33	:
Business Associate		'9		. · · · · 2 ·	
Stranger		123	grand the second	30 (144)	
Unknown (case unsolv	ved)	<u>102</u>		<u>25</u>	
		405	,	100%	

Source: Statistics Canada, Special Data Request (1991)

That said, it is clear that a substantial number of sexual homicides (30 percent) involved relative strangers. In fact, only about one in 20 cases involved someone who was related to the victim. Only one case out of a total of 405 involved the spouse of the victim. The category accounting for the highest percentage of cases (one in three) was "acquaintance".

These findings set sexual homicide apart from the pattern of relationship that characterizes homicide in general. Thus of the 11,033 homicides recorded over the period in the general homicide database, fully 1,334 or 12 percent involved the spouse of the victim. Another difference between sexual homicide and homicide in general is the percentage of cases that remained unsolved. For homicide in general, 17 percent of cases were unsolved. Of the sexual homicide category, fully one in four cases remained unsolved. This is obviously related to the demographic profile: homicide in general involves a considerably smaller percentage of stranger killings, that are for obvious reasons harder to solve (eight percent compared to 30 percent for sexual homicide).

2.4.2 Sexual homicide: legal category and the statistical scheme of an armining the state of the

Fully 99 percent of sexual homicide reports were classified as first or second degree murder. The remainder were classified as manslaughter. This does not mean that 99 percent of convictions were for murder. A substantial percentage of murder charges result in convictions for manslaughter. This is true for murder charges in general but there are no data to suggest that sexual assault homicides are any different. Although one of the aims of the homicide return is to obtain information on decisions taking place after the charge has been laid, this type of information was not available from the data provided for this study.

A similar percentage (98 percent) of robbery, theft and breaking and entering homicide incidents were initially classified as murder. The percentage of murder charges out of all homicide incidents is slightly lower if one examines all homicides in Canada. For 1988, 93 percent of all homicide charges were first or second degree murder (Statistics Canada, 1989).

The classification probably says more about police charging practices than the actual nature of sexual homicides. One of the consistent findings in the literature (e.g., MacDonald, 1971) is that a percentage of sexual homicides may be incidental in

⁹ The database does not distinguish between first and second degree murder. According to the <u>Criminal Code</u> (see introduction to this report), all cases of homicide in the commission of a sexual assault should result in a first degree murder charge.

the sense that they arise from the suspect's use of force in the commission of the sexual assault, rather than from a premeditated intention to kill.

2.4.3 Homicide clearance rates

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A critical law enforcement question concerns the clearance of incidents. The first step in the police investigation is the determination of whether a crime report is "founded" or not. A certain percentage of reports are declared unfounded by the police. This means that in the opinion of the police, an offence did not take place or was not attempted. The reports that survive this first screening are classified as actual offences, that is they are "founded." Once a report of a crime has been declared "founded," the police will attempt to "clear the crime." Crimes are cleared in several ways, most often by the laying of a charge ("cleared by charge") but also when other events take place, such as the suspect fleeing the country or committing suicide. In the event that one of these latter conditions is met, the crime is declared "cleared otherwise" (see Statistics Canada, 1990a for further details).

Since homicide is frequently an offence involving people who were related or known to one another, it has a high clearance rate. Over a recent ten-year period (1978-1987), three-quarters of all reported homicides were cleared by charge. A further eight percent were cleared because the suspect committed suicide or for other reasons, leaving an unsolved rate of 17 percent. This unsolved rate is lower than most other <u>Criminal Code</u> offences.

The clearance rate for sexual homicide is similar: over the period covered in this study, 75 percent of incidents were cleared by charge. In one percent of the cases the suspect committed suicide and the remaining 23 percent remained unsolved. The unsolved rate is slightly higher for sexual homicides than for all homicides. The unsolved rate for homicides occurring during the commission of a robbery, theft or breaking and entering was 27 percent.

Finally, this report cannot deal with issues pertaining to conviction rates, since the data provided do not include information on criminal justice decisions following the laying of a charge. We were not able to address issues on the basis of data provided, such as whether the conviction rate for sexual homicide is higher than for other types of homicide, although clearly it is important that we have information on the eventual disposition of sexual homicide cases.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS of particle states and the control of the particle states and the control of the

The criminal justice system in Canada needs more comprehensive data on incidents of sexual homicide. While we know more about homicide than any other type of offence, the homicide return form in Canada (see Appendix B) does not capture a great deal of information, and could be considerably more detailed. For example, the homicide return used in the United States is far more comprehensive, including almost 200 questions concerning all aspects of the case. While the use of a form such as this in Canada would consume more time (and consequently more investigative resources), the gravity of the crime suggests that the use of such a form would be a worthwhile investment. One area that needs greater attention is the nature of prior criminal justice contacts with offenders eventually convicted of sexual homicide. The evidence from a few recent cases suggests that these offenders have had repeated contacts with the criminal justice system.

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Sexual homicide is the most serious form of homicide in the <u>Criminal Code</u> of Canada. Notwithstanding the fact that it is extremely rare, it is a crime that receives a great deal of media attention when it does occur; cases such as Stanton and Sweeney and several others being obvious examples within recent years. As such, sexual homicide generates considerable fear, particularly among the more vulnerable members of our society. In light of this, it seems gratuitous to state that sexual homicide has received insufficient attention from the criminal justice system. This descriptive report represents but a small step towards understanding the true nature and cause of this most tragic crime.

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¹⁰ A copy of this form can be obtained from the authors of this report.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH REPORTS
FROM THE
SEXUAL ASSAULT
EVALUATION PROGRAM
(DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CANADA)

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RESEARCH REPORTS FROM THE SEXUAL ASSAULT EVALUATION PROGRAM

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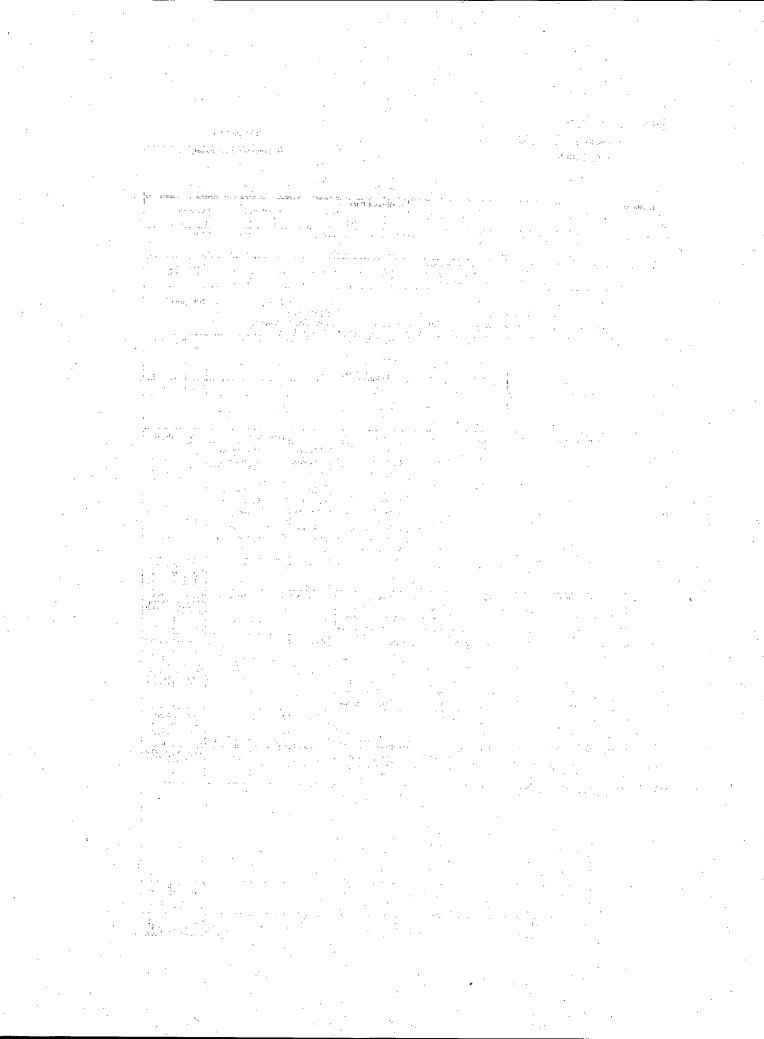
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NOTE: This form was in use until January 1991 (the period covered by this study). A new form is now in use, and can be obtained by contacting the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, located in Statistics Canada.



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12	. Circumatance	s of alleged offenc	e: Give briaf o	iatalla -	•					,
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INSTRUCTIONS

Occurrence:

- 1 and 2. Offence report all cases of capital and non-capital murder, manslaughter and infanticide
 - Location of Offence give name of city, town or village; if rural, give section township
 and range or mileage to nearest town; when applicable give county, township or rural
 municipality; report province or territory.
 - 4. Date of Offence give date offence occurred (day, month, year).
 - 5. Time give appropriate time death occurred (a.m. or p.m.).
 - Means of Offence indicate appropriate category. Specify any further details as to type
 of weapon (e.g., if a firearm was used, give type and calibre), instrument, substance,
 violence or other method used in causing victim's death, in section 12 Circumstances
 of Alleged Offence.
 - Motive Indicate motive for crime, if possible, e.g., sexual assault, revenge, jealousy, escaping arrest or custody, while committing another offence (e.g., kidnapping, abortion, arson), etc. Any further details are to be described in section 12 — Circumstances of Alleged Offence.
 - Present Standing of Case report whether Cleared by charge, Warrant issued, Cleared otherwise, or Not Cleared (unsolved); specify under Cleared otherwise where accused committed suicide prior to being charged or other situations; notify STATISTICS CANADA when unsolved cases are cleared.
 - Court Procedure indicate date of "Arraignment", "Preliminary Hearing" and/or "Trial"
 if any of these procedures have taken place.

Victim(s):

 Give the number of victims, their full names and aliases, address, sex, age, marital status and racial origin — if more than three victims, list details separately.

Please note: Marital Status — common-law may be combined with one of the other marital statuses.

Accused:

11. Give number of accused, their full names and aliases, address, FPS No., date of arrest, sex, date and place of birth, marital status, racial origin, occupation, education and relationship to victim — if more than three accused list details separately.

Please note: Marital Status — common-law may be combined with one of the other marital statuses.

Circumstances:

 Give brief details of offence describing events in sequence including contributing factors, e.g. alcohol, drugs, etc. — use reverse side or separate sheet if necessary.

If a restricted firearm was used indicate if it was registered.

Please note: To assist us in an ongoing historical study on homicide, please record any known criminal record of the accused and/or victim(s) and also any previous mental history, if applicable.

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH LITERATURE ON SEXUAL HOMICIDE

RESEARCH LITERATURE ON SEXUAL HOMICIDE

- Note: While this list contains many of the most frequently cited articles and monographs, the list is not exhaustive.
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