

# **Police Statistics on Culpable Deaths in New Zealand**



## **A Summary of Statistics about Victims of Murder, Manslaughter, and Infanticide**

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## **1. Background to this report**

This report is released coincidentally with calendar year Official Statistics for recorded crime in New Zealand. April 2010 is the first time this report has been produced. It is intended that it be produced annually.

Official Statistics for recorded crime count the number of recorded and resolved offences as well as the number of apprehensions of offenders for these resolved offences. New Zealand recorded crime statistics do not count victims of crime, nor do they give demographic information describing victims of crime.

It is not currently feasible to produce comprehensive statistics on victims of crime from New Zealand Police records. However, since there are fewer than 100 culpable deaths in New Zealand each year, it is feasible to produce this report containing statistics about victims of these offences.

## **2. Summary of what this report includes**

Tables are provided that give breakdowns of statistics for culpable deaths that occurred during the 2007 and 2009 calendar years. These breakdowns include:

- Type of offence,
- Gender of victim,
- Age of victim,
- Ethnicity of victim,
- Relationship of the victim to the offender,
- Type of weapon used to kill the victim, and
- Type of location where the victim was killed.

A culpable death is one where the killer(s) is(are) liable for murder, manslaughter or infanticide<sup>1</sup>.

Figures in this report may differ from figures for recorded offences reported elsewhere. Reasons for this include:

- To ensure comparability between different years, official statistics for recorded offences exclude updates to police records that occur more than two weeks after the end of each year. This report updates figures each year, as cases develop. This ensures no deaths are missed, and that data will be as accurate as possible.
- Sometimes more than one offender is involved. One may use a knife to kill the victim and another may use a firearm. Police use different offence codes for

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<sup>1</sup> In neither 2007 nor 2009 were any infanticides recorded by police.

these two acts, so two offences will be recorded even though there is only one victim.

Data in this report were drawn from the New Zealand Police National Intelligence Application (NIA) on 15 January 2010.

### 3. Why give figures for both 2007 and 2009

Police in New Zealand investigate all suspicious deaths. Such investigations can take many months or even years to conclude. Current statistics for 2009 will therefore include many cases where an investigation is still continuing. Although a death may appear suspicious at first, investigations may conclude that the death was not homicide. Because of this, figures for 2007 are not comparable with figures for 2009.

Figures for 2009 have been provided because they are timely. Figures for 2007 have been provided because most of the investigations relating to deaths that occurred in 2007 have concluded, and so the figures are more stable.

### 4. Figures for the 2007 calendar year

#### *Offence type*

As shown in Table 4.1 below, there were 65 culpable deaths in 2007. Police recorded 49 of these victims as being murdered, and the remaining 16 as being killed where the offender was liable for manslaughter<sup>2</sup>. 38 of the victims were male, and 27 female.

<b>TABLE 4.1</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Murder</b>	29	20	<b>49</b>
<b>Manslaughter</b>	9	7	<b>16</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>65</b>

#### *Age of victim*

Victims were spread across all ages. However, as can be seen in Table 4.2, nearly one quarter were males in their twenties. Only one child between 5 and 14 years of age was killed. However, 8 victims were under 5 years of age. 12 victims were under 17.

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<sup>2</sup> Police statistical records are not altered from Murder to Manslaughter in instances where police charge an offender with Murder, but a jury only convicts for Manslaughter.

<b>TABLE 4.2</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Under 5 years of age</b>	2	6	<b>8</b>
<b>Age 5-9</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Age 10-14</b>	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Age 15-19</b>	2	2	<b>4</b>
<b>Age 20-29</b>	15	5	<b>20</b>
<b>Age 30-39</b>	8	3	<b>11</b>
<b>Age 40-49</b>	6	2	<b>8</b>
<b>Age 50-59</b>	3	3	<b>6</b>
<b>Age 60 and above</b>	2	5	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>65</b>

### ***Ethnicity of victim***

As shown in Table 4.3, more than one third of victims were European males, and almost half of all victims were European. However, European<sup>3</sup> is the largest ethnic group in New Zealand. So, it does not follow that Europeans are over-represented in these statistics.

It is, however, likely that Maori are over-represented in these statistics, as just over one third of all victims were Maori, and Maori make up approximately one seventh of New Zealand's population. A similar number of Maori males and females were victims.

<b>TABLE 4.3</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Asian</b>	0	5	<b>5</b>
<b>European</b>	22	9	<b>31</b>
<b>Indian</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Maori</b>	11	9	<b>20</b>
<b>Pacific Island</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Other/Unknown</b>	4	4	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>65</b>

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<sup>3</sup> New Zealand Police collect Ethnicity data according to different categories than do Statistics New Zealand. So it is difficult to precisely estimate the proportion of New Zealand's population than makes up each ethnic group according to New Zealand Police categories.

### ***Relationship of victim to offender***

Table 4.4 presents figures based on the victim's relationship to the offender. In 7 of the 65 deaths, either no offender was identified by police, or the victim's relationship to the offender was not clear or not recorded. It is likely that in most instances where the relationship between victim and offender is not recorded, this is because they are not related.

Of the 58 victims where the relationship was recorded, 32 (55%) had no family relationship to the offender. However, in three of these cases there was some type of third-party link to a family member.

Nearly two thirds of the female victims were killed by offenders identified as being a family member, partner<sup>4</sup> or ex-partner. However, only 8 of the 38 male victims were killed by offenders identified as being a family member, partner or ex-partner. The majority of male victims were killed by offenders who were unrelated to the victim.

Note: Where Table 4.4 refers to "Parent", this means that the victim was the parent of the offender. Similarly, where Table 4.4 refers to "Child", this means that the victim was the child of the offender. It does not necessarily mean that the victim was a child.

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'partner' includes both formal and informal relationships, whether living together or not. This may, for example, include boy-friend/girl-friend, whether or not the relationship involved a sexual relationship.

<b>TABLE 4.4</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Couple<sup>5</sup></b>	4	8	<b>12</b>
<b>Parent<sup>6</sup></b>	2	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Child<sup>7</sup></b>	0	5	<b>5</b>
<b>Other family<sup>8</sup></b>	2	4	<b>6</b>
<b>Not family but linked to family<sup>9</sup></b>	3	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Not family – other<sup>10</sup></b>	21	8	<b>29</b>
<b>Not recorded/not clear</b>	5	1	<b>6</b>
<b>No offender identified</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>65</b>

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<sup>5</sup> 'Couple' is defined as being where the victim and offender are or have been recognised by society/their associates, as a couple. It includes married, de facto, civil union, separated, divorced and boy/girl friend not living together. This definition does not take into account age, gender or sexual relationship. It would include, for example young adolescents whose school classmates consider them to be boy/girl friend. It would exclude people who are not a couple, but have had sexual intercourse, such as in prostitution, a one-off sexual encounter, or one or more illicit sexual encounters.

<sup>6</sup> 'Parent' is defined as being where the victim was a biological, adoptive or foster parent of the offender. It also includes the de facto partner of the offender's biological parent, provided the victim and offender live together, or have lived together when the offender was a child. It does not include the boy/girl friend of the offender's mother/father where the boy/girl friend does not live with the mother/father and offender.

<sup>7</sup> 'Child' is defined as being where the victim was a biological, adopted or foster child of the offender. It also includes the biological child of the de facto partner of the offender, provided the victim and offender live together, or have lived together when the victim was a child. It does not include the child of the boy/girl friend of the victim's mother/father where the boy/girl friend does not live with the mother/father and victim.

<sup>8</sup> 'Family' is defined as it would be colloquially understood internationally. It includes siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles and cousins. It excludes friends of the victim/offender's parents who may be referred to as uncle/aunt. 'Other family' excludes victims who have been counted in the categories of 'Couple', 'Parent', and 'Child'. Note: Boy/girl friend relationships, although counted in this report as 'Couple', may not necessarily be 'Family'. So, it is not possible from this report to determine how many victims were in the same 'Family' as their offender(s).

<sup>9</sup> 'Not family but linked to family' is defined as the victim and offender not being 'Family', but each having one of the above four relationships to a third person. For example, this would include a victim who is killed by her spouse's ex-spouse. It would also include a victim who is the new boy/girl friend of the offenders mother/father.

<sup>10</sup> 'Not family - other' includes both victims who know their killer and those to whom the killer is a stranger.

## ***Weapon***

In all 16 of the manslaughter deaths, no weapon was used. However, eight of these deaths were traffic related.

One third of murders involved no weapon, and one third involved a stabbing/cutting instrument such as a knife, sword or broken bottle. Less than 10% of deaths involved firearms.

<b>TABLE 4.5</b>	<b>Murder</b>	<b>Manslaughter</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Firearm</b>	6	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Stabbing/Cutting weapon</b>	16	0	<b>16</b>
<b>Other weapon</b>	11	0	<b>11</b>
<b>No weapon</b>	16	16	<b>32</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>65</b>

## ***Location***

Just under half of all victims of culpable deaths were killed in dwellings. Amongst these, just over half of the murder victims were killed in dwellings.

More than a third of culpable deaths occurred in public places.

<b>TABLE 4.6</b>	<b>Murder</b>	<b>Manslaughter</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Dwelling</b>	26	5	<b>31</b>
<b>Public road/ Street/ Public place</b>	16	9	<b>25</b>
<b>Other/ Unknown</b>	7	2	<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>65</b>



## 5. Figures for the 2009 calendar year

### *Offence type*

There were 88 culpable deaths in 2009<sup>11</sup>. Police recorded 65 of these victims as being murdered, and the remaining 23 were killed where the offender was liable for manslaughter<sup>12</sup>. 59 of the victims were male, and 29 female.

<b>TABLE 5.1</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Murder</b>	41	24	<b>65</b>
<b>Manslaughter</b>	18	5	<b>23</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>88</b>

### *Age of victim*

Victims were spread across all ages. However, as can be seen in Table 5.2 below, males between the ages of 15 and 49 accounted for two thirds of all deaths. Of the 14 victims under 15 years of age, 12 were less than 5 years of age. 18 victims were under 17.

<b>TABLE 5.2</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Under 5 years of age</b>	6	6	<b>12</b>
<b>Age 5-9</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Age 10-14</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Age 15-19</b>	8	4	<b>12</b>
<b>Age 20-29</b>	10	4	<b>14</b>
<b>Age 30-39</b>	15	6	<b>21</b>
<b>Age 40-49</b>	11	7	<b>18</b>
<b>Age 50-59</b>	4	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Age 60 and above</b>	3	2	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>88</b>

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<sup>11</sup> Note: figures for 2009 are very recent and may change in the future once investigations have completed. These figures are therefore not comparable with those given earlier in the paper for 2007.

<sup>12</sup> New Zealand Police statistics will record a Murder in all instances where an offender is charged with Murder, irrespective of court outcome. Police statistical records are not altered from Murder to Manslaughter in instances where police charge an offender with Murder, but a jury only convicts for Manslaughter.

### ***Ethnicity of victim***

As shown in Table 5.3, nearly half of all victims were Maori, and two thirds of Maori victims were male. Given that Maori make up approximately only 15 percent of New Zealand's population, Maori are over-represented in these statistics for culpable deaths.

<b>TABLE 5.3</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Asian</b>	2	1	<b>3</b>
<b>European</b>	20	7	<b>27</b>
<b>Indian</b>	3	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Maori</b>	26	13	<b>39</b>
<b>Pacific Island</b>	4	1	<b>5</b>
<b>Other/Unknown</b>	4	7	<b>11</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>88</b>

### ***Relationship of victim to offender***

Table 5.4 presents figures based on the victim's relationship to the offender. In 18 of the 88 deaths, either no offender was identified by police, or the victim's relationship to the offender was not clear or not recorded. It is likely that in most instances where the relationship between victim and offender is not recorded, this is because they are not related.

Of the 70 victims where the relationship was recorded, 30 (43%) had no family relationship to the offender. However, in one of these cases there was some type of third-party link to a family member.

Nearly three quarters of the female victims were killed by offenders identified as being a family member or partner<sup>13</sup>, and nearly a third of the male victims were killed by offenders identified as being a family member or partner. The majority of male victims were killed by offenders who were unrelated to the victim.

Note: Where Table 5.4 refers to "Parent", this means that the victim was the parent of the offender. Similarly, where Table 5.4 refers to "Child", this means that the victim was the child of the offender. It does not necessarily mean that the victim was a child.

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<sup>13</sup> The term 'partner' includes both formal and informal relationships, whether living together or not. This may, for example, include boy-friend/girl-friend, whether or not the relationship involved a sexual relationship.

<b>TABLE 5.4</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Couple<sup>14</sup></b>	3	14	<b>17</b>
<b>Parent<sup>15</sup></b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Child<sup>16</sup></b>	8	5	<b>13</b>
<b>Other family<sup>17</sup></b>	7	2	<b>9</b>
<b>Not family but linked to family<sup>18</sup></b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Not family – other<sup>19</sup></b>	24	5	<b>29</b>
<b>Not recorded/not clear</b>	14	3	<b>17</b>
<b>No offender identified</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>88</b>

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<sup>14</sup> 'Couple' is defined as being where the victim and offender are or have been recognised by society/their associates, as a couple. It includes married, de facto, civil union, separated, divorced and boy/girl friend not living together. This definition does not take into account age, gender or sexual relationship. It would include, for example young adolescents whose school classmates consider them to be boy/girl friend. It would exclude people who are not a couple, but have had sexual intercourse, such as in prostitution, a one-off sexual encounter, or one or more illicit sexual encounters.

<sup>15</sup> 'Parent' is defined as being where the victim was a biological, adoptive or foster parent of the offender. It also includes the de facto partner of the offender's biological parent, provided the victim and offender live together, or have lived together when the offender was a child. It does not include the boy/girl friend of the offender's mother/father where the boy/girl friend does not live with the mother/father and offender.

<sup>16</sup> 'Child' is defined as being where the victim was a biological, adopted or foster child of the offender. It also includes the biological child of the de facto partner of the offender, provided the victim and offender live together, or have lived together when the victim was a child. It does not include the child of the boy/girl friend of the victim's mother/father where the boy/girl friend does not live with the mother/father and victim.

<sup>17</sup> 'Family' is defined as it would be colloquially understood internationally. It includes siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles and cousins. It excludes friends of the victim/offender's parents who may be referred to as uncle/aunt. 'Other family' excludes victims who have been counted in the categories of 'Couple', 'Parent', and 'Child'. Note: Boy/girl friend relationships, although counted in this report as 'Couple', may not necessarily be 'Family'. So, it is not possible from this report to determine how many victims were in the same 'Family' as their offender(s).

<sup>18</sup> 'Not family but linked to family' is defined as the victim and offender not being 'Family', but each having one of the above four relationships to a third person. For example, this would include a victim who is killed by her spouse's ex-spouse. It would also include a victim who is the new boy/girl friend of the offenders mother/father.

<sup>19</sup> 'Not family - other' includes both victims who know their killer and those to whom the killer is a stranger.

## ***Weapon***

In nearly all cases of manslaughter, and half of all culpable deaths, no weapon was used. However, 9 of the manslaughter deaths were traffic related.

<b>TABLE 5.5</b>	<b>Murder</b>	<b>Manslaughter</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Firearm</b>	11	1	<b>12</b>
<b>Stabbing/Cutting weapon</b>	17	0	<b>17</b>
<b>Other weapon</b>	14	1	<b>15</b>
<b>No weapon</b>	23	21	<b>44</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>88</b>

## ***Location***

Over two thirds of victims of culpable deaths were killed in dwellings.

One quarter of victims of culpable deaths were killed in public places.

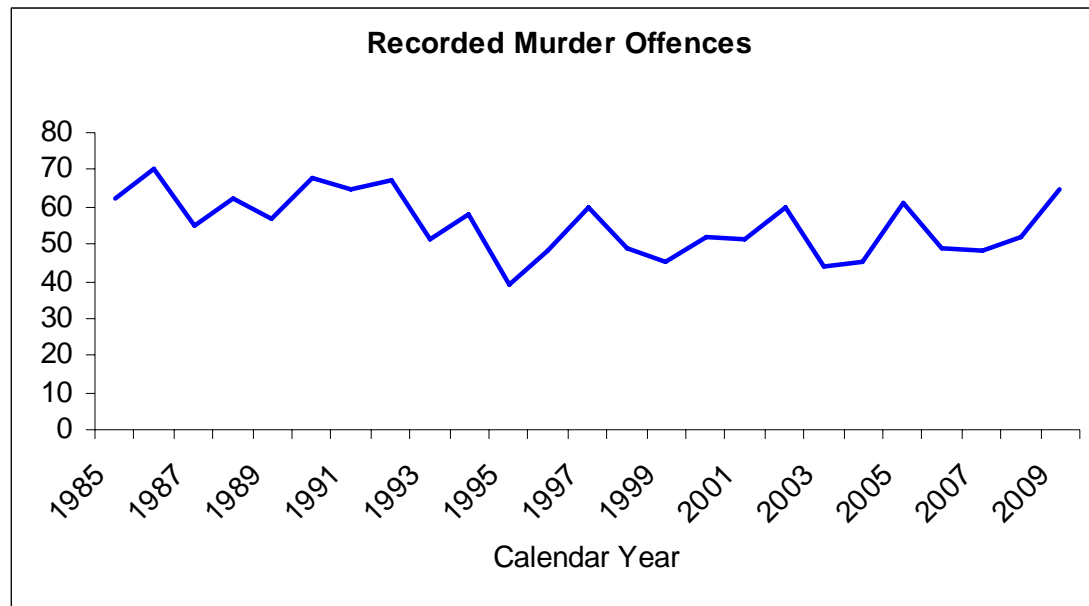
<b>TABLE 5.6</b>	<b>Murder</b>	<b>Manslaughter</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Dwelling</b>	55	5	<b>60</b>
<b>Public road/ Street/ Public place</b>	8	14	<b>22</b>
<b>Other/ Unknown</b>	2	4	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>88</b>

## **6. Trends**

As explained above in section 3, the figures for 2007 are more stable and reliable than those for 2009. Accordingly, figures presented for 2007 are not comparable with those for 2009.

2010 is the first year that these culpable death statistics have been produced. Trends across time in these figures are not yet available, but will emerge over future years.

Trends in the number of culpable deaths will, however, be similar to trends in offence statistics. The following chart presents the numbers of recorded offences for murder for each year since 1985.



As can be seen above, the number of murders in New Zealand varies from year to year within the range of 40-70, however, the long-term trend is flat, with no significant rise or fall.

Although both 2007 and 2009 were within the expected range of annual variation, the number of murders in 2007 was below the average for the last 25 years, and the number of murders in 2009 was above the average.