

Police Statistics on Homicide Victims in New Zealand for the period 2007 - 2009



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

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Introduction

Background

This report is released coincident with calendar year Official Statistics for recorded crime in New Zealand.

Official Statistics for recorded crime count the number of recorded and resolved offences as well as the number of apprehensions of offenders for the resolved offences. They provide demographic attributes of offenders, but do not include information about victims of crime.

While it is not currently feasible to produce comprehensive statistics on victims of crime from New Zealand Police records, since there are fewer than 100 homicides in New Zealand each year, it is possible to produce this report containing statistics about victims of this limited set of very serious offences.

Purpose

This report is not intended as a comprehensive study on the various contexts in which homicides occur. Rather, it provides some descriptive statistics that complement other sources of information such as:

- Official Statistics for Recorded and Resolved Offences,
- Official Statistics for Recorded Apprehensions,
- The New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey, and
- relevant research publications and government reports.

Specifically, this report presents simple descriptive statistics about:

- Who has been killed,
- The relationship of the victim to the offender,
- What type of location people were killed in, and
- What type of weapon (if any) was used.

The report does not include descriptions of offenders. Such information is provided in Police Official Statistics for Recorded Apprehensions. Neither does it describe either the contexts in which homicides occur or the policy implications for Police or other agencies. Such information is beyond the scope of this report.

Limitations of Homicide data

Police in New Zealand investigate all suspicious deaths. Such investigations can take many months or even years to conclude. Current statistics for 2010 and 2011 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.

For this reason, the main body of this report only provides statistics for 2007 to 2009. Most investigations into homicides in these two years will have been completed and the data are therefore considered stable.

Statistics for recorded apprehensions for offences occurring during the 2011 calendar year are being published coincident with this report on 2 April 2012. To complement those apprehensions statistics, statistics about the victims of Homicide offences that occurred in 2011 have been included as an appendix to this report. However, the reader should note that these 2011 figures are not yet stable, as many of these investigations are still continuing, and Police records are still being updated with new information. Updated figures for both 2010 and 2011 will be included in the main body of future editions this report, after they have stabilised.

Queries Relating to this Report

Questions about this report can be directed to the Statistical Services Unit, Police National Headquarters through the following channels:

Email: statistics@police.govt.nz

Phone: 04 460 2999

Data

Offence type

As shown in Table 2.1 below, there were 92 homicide victims in 2009; 22 more than the year before. The majority of victims in all the years were murdered, and the majority of victims were male.

August 2009 experienced an abnormally high number of 16 homicides. This was an abnormal spike of unrelated cases distributed across the country. It is inconsistent with the underlying trend, which is flat.

Table 2.1	2007			2008			2009		
	Male	Female	2007	Male	Female	2008	Male	Female	2009
Murder	29	19	48	28	23	51	41	25	66
Manslaughter	10	7	17	13	6	19	21	5	26
TOTAL	39	26	65	41	29	70	62	30	92

Age of victim

Victims are spread across all ages. However, as shown in Table 2.2 below, this spread is not even. Whereas there were few homicides involving victims between the age of 5 and 14, children under five years of age were more highly victimised.

Not explicitly shown in Table 2.2, 48 victims were under 18 over the period. Also, victims between the age of 18 and 29 were also disproportionately represented in these statistics.

Table 2.2	2007			2008			2009		
	Male	Female	2007	Male	Female	2008	Male	Female	2009
Under 5 yr	2	6	8	3	2	5	6	6	12
Age 5- 9	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Age 10-14	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	1
Age 15-19	2	2	4	4	3	7	11	4	15
Age 20-29	15	5	20	9	8	17	11	5	16
Age 30-39	9	3	12	9	5	14	15	6	21
Age 40-49	6	2	8	6	4	10	11	8	19
Age 50-59	3	3	6	3	3	6	3	0	3
60 and above	2	4	6	5	3	8	3	1	4
TOTAL	39	26	65	41	29	70	62	30	92

Ethnicity of victim

As shown in Table 2.3, over one third of homicide victims whose ethnicity was identified were European males, and Europeans constitute the largest group of victims except for 2009, when there were more Maori victims. However, European¹ is the largest ethnic group within 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 one third of victims whose ethnicity was identified were Maori, yet Maori make up approximately only one seventh of New Zealand's population.

Table 2.3	2007			2008			2009		
	Male	Female	2007	Male	Female	2008	Male	Female	2009
Asian	0	5	5	1	3	4	2	1	3
European	22	8	30	18	10	28	23	8	31
Indian	0	0	0	2	1	3	3	1	4
Maori	12	9	21	9	8	17	26	13	39
Pacific Isle	1	0	1	4	2	6	4	1	5
Other / Unknown	4	4	8	7	5	12	4	6	10
TOTAL	39	26	65	41	29	70	62	30	92

¹ New Zealand Police collects Ethnicity data according to different categories than does Statistics New Zealand. So, it is difficult to precisely estimate the proportion of New Zealand's population that makes up each ethnic group according to New Zealand Police categories.

Relationship of victim to offender²

Table 2.4 presents figures based on the victim's relationship to the offender. In a number of cases 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 closely related.

Across three years, the majority of homicide victims were not killed by partners or family members. Of the 88 who were, just under half were in a relationship as a couple. 28 of these 37 victims were female.

Only four victims were a Parent of the offender. However, just under a third of victims (24) were the Child of the offender, and about a fifth (18) were other family members.

Refer to Appendix B for the relationship definitions.

Table 2.4	2007			2008			2009		
	Male	Female	2007	Male	Female	2008	Male	Female	2009
Couple	4	8	12	1	6	7	4	14	18
Parent	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	1
Child	0	5	5	3	3	6	8	5	13
Other family	2	4	6	3	1	4	7	1	8
Not family but linked to family	3	0	3	1	0	1	1	0	1
Not family - other	22	9	31	28	17	45	38	8	46
Not recorded / unclear	6	0	6	4	2	6	3	2	5
TOTAL	39	26	65	41	29	70	62	30	92

² These data should not be interpreted as Family Violence statistics. Police classify certain reports as Family Violence for operational purposes. The Police operational definition of Family Violence differs from definition in the Domestic Violence Act, and changes from time to time, so is not used in this report.

Weapon

All but four of the Manslaughter victims were killed without a weapon. However, 30 Manslaughters and two Murders were traffic related. Only one in ten homicides involved firearms.

Table 2.5	2007			2008			2009		
	Murder	Manslaughter	2007	Murder	Manslaughter	2008	Murder	Manslaughter	2009
Firearm	6	0	6	7	0	7	11	1	12
Stabbing / Cutting Weapon	16	0	16	14	1	15	17	0	17
Other Weapon	11	1	12	12	0	12	13	1	14
No Weapon	15	16	31	18	18	36	25	24	49
TOTAL	48	17	65	51	19	70	66	26	92

Location

Most homicides occurred either in dwellings or outdoor public places.

Table 2.6	2007			2008			2009		
	Murder	Manslaughter	2007	Murder	Manslaughter	2008	Murder	Manslaughter	2009
Dwelling	27	6	33	29	13	32	56	6	62
Public Road / Street / Public Place	16	9	25	18	13	31	8	18	26
Other / Unknown	5	2	7	4	3	7	2	2	4
TOTAL	48	17	65	51	19	70	66	26	92

Appendix A: Figures for the 2011 calendar year

The following tables present descriptive statistics about the victims of the homicides reported in the 2011 calendar year Official Statistics for recorded offences. These figures give a snapshot of data in Police systems as at 14 January 2012.

As discussed earlier in this report, Police investigations are still continuing into many of these cases. As a result, data in Police systems will continue to change. It is likely to take up to two years before figures stabilise. Caution should therefore be observed when comparing figures in this appendix with figures in the main body of the report.

Offence type

Table A.1	Male	Female	Total
Murder	24	15	39
Manslaughter	16	7	23
Total	40	22	62

Age of victim

Table A.2	Male	Female	Total
Under 5 years of age	7	4	11
Age 5-9	0	0	0
Age 10-14	1	3	4
Age 15-19	3	3	6
Age 20-29	5	4	9
Age 30-39	4	0	4
Age 40-49	9	5	14
Age 50-59	9	1	10
Age 60 and above	2	2	4
Total	40	22	62

Ethnicity of victim

Table A.3	Male	Female	Total
Asian	4	0	4
European	16	9	25
Indian	1	2	3
Maori	13	6	19
Pacific Island	4	2	6
Other/Unknown	2	3	5
Total	40	22	62

Relationship of victim to offender

Table A.7	Male	Female	Total
Couple	2	9	11
Parent	1	0	1
Child	6	2	8
Other family	1	2	3
Not family but linked to family	0	1	1
Not family – other	19	6	25
Not recorded / unclear	11	2	13
Total	40	22	62

Weapon

Table A.5	Murder	Manslaughter	Total
Firearm	3	0	3
Stabbing / Cutting Weapon	16	0	16
Other Weapon	6	1	7
No weapon	14	22	36
Total	39	23	62

Location

Table A.6	Murder	Manslaughter	Total
Dwelling	30	9	39
Public Road / Street / Public Place	7	13	20
Other / Unknown	2	1	3
Total	39	23	62

Appendix B: Relationship Definitions

Couple

'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.

Parent

'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.

Child

'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. 'Child' in this table, refers to the relationship, not the age of the victim. It therefore includes adults.

Family

'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

'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).

Not family but linked to family

'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.

Not family - other

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