

Serial murder in Australia

A recent report by the Australian Institute of Criminology (Mouzos & West 2007) uses data collected by the National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) to examine the incidence of serial murder in Australia. Over the 17-year life of the NHMP, there have been 5,743 known homicide offenders and 5,617 victims in a total of 5,226 known homicide incidents in Australia. Serial murders account for one percent of this total, with 11 groupings of serial murders committed by 13 known offenders and a total of 52 known victims. The table below shows these offenders divided into the four classifications commonly assigned to serial murderers: the visionary, who are driven to kill by voices or visions; the mission-oriented who believe it is their duty to eliminate individuals they consider unworthy; the hedonistic, who murder for excitement or arousal; and the power or control group who gain pleasure from dominating and controlling their victims. The majority of victims (63%) in these incidents were female (n=33), a contrast to the general pattern of homicide in Australia (Davies & Mouzos 2007) where most victims (63%) are male.

Typology of serial murder in Australia, 1989–90 to 2005–06

Incident year (s)	Gender of offender	Type	Number and gender of victims	Modus operandi
1992–99	4 males	Power control oriented	10 males; 2 females	Victims all known by at least one offender; bodies dismembered
1993	Male	Mission oriented	3 females	Victims taken from the street and controlled with a 'gun', actually aluminium piping; victims stabbed violently
1989–92	Male	Power control oriented	1 male; 6 females	Picked up and overpowered hitchhikers with a firearm; victims received multiple stab wounds
1998–99	Male	Hedonistic	4 females	Overpowered on the street, put in car boot, throat slit
1998	Male	Mission oriented/ power control	2 males; 1 female	Disabled pensioners strangled to death
1997–2001	Male	Power control oriented	3 females	Frenzied knife attack from behind; multiple stab wounds
1989–90	Male	Mission oriented	6 females	Victims assaulted with hammer then strangled with own pantyhose
1974–90	Male	Hedonistic	1 male; 3 females	Strangulation, objects stuffed in mouth
1989, 1990 1992, 1999	Female	Visionary	2 males; 2 females	Suffocation
1996	Male	Hedonistic	3 males	Stabbing, shooting
1996–97	Unsolved	Not known	3 females	Abducted from the street within close proximity of each other

Source: AIC NHMP 1989–2006 [computer file]

References

Davies M & Mouzos J 2007. *Homicide in Australia: 2005–06 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report*. Research and public policy series no. 77. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/77/index.html>

Mouzos J & West D 2007. An examination of serial murder in Australia. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* no. 346. <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi346.html>