



Research in Practice

No. 31 February 2013

Homicides involving international visitors in Australia

The murder/manslaughter of international visitors in Australia can have significant implications for Australian international relations. In particular, the questions about international visitor safety that can follow after news of murder can have far-reaching consequences for a range of important economic sectors, such as tourism and international student education.

Through its National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP), the Australian Institute of Criminology collects detailed information on all homicides that occur nationwide each year, including those involving international visitors.

A forthcoming biennial NHMP monitoring report examines homicides in Australia throughout 2008–09 and 2009–10. It provides detailed analyses of a total of 541 victims killed in 510 homicide incidents across those two years (253 and 257 incidents, respectively).

Further analysis showed that 14 international visitors were the victim of homicide in Australia in a total of 12 incidents throughout 2008–09 (8 victims in 7 incidents) and 2009–10 (6 victims in 5 incidents).

Overall, homicides involving international visitors comprised only two percent of all homicides in Australia. The number of homicide deaths of international visitors was estimated at 0.66 deaths for every one million short-term visitors arriving in Australia in 2008–09 and 0.46 per one million visitors in 2009–10.

Table 1 Homicide incidents involving overseas visitors, by year, 1994–95 to 2009–10 (rate per million international visitors each year^a)

Year	Incidents (n)	Victims (n)	Rate
1994–95	1	1	0.16
1995–96	2	3	0.44
1996–97	6	8 ^b	1.10
1997–98	1	1	0.13
1998–99	1	1	0.13
1999–2000	1	12 ^c	1.45
2000–01	2	2	0.22
2001–02	4	4	0.47
2002–03	2	2	0.24
2003–04	4	4	0.43
2004–05	4	4	0.39
2005–06	5	6	0.56
2006–07	5	5	0.44
2007–08	8	9	0.76
2008–09	7	8	0.66
2009–10	5	6	0.46
Total	58	76	0.55

a: Denominator used to calculate the homicide rate is the total number of short-term visitors arriving in Australia each year (ABS 2012)

b: Includes the international visitors killed by Ivan Milat and those killed by Martin Bryant at Port Arthur

c: Childers Palace Backpackers Hostel fire

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
Caucasian—White	5	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	9
Maori/Pacific Islander	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Chinese	4	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	10
Indo-Chinese	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Other Asian	3	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	11
Other	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total	16	12	2	4	0	3	0	1	38

It is important to note that the majority of those international visitors killed in Australia were killed by someone known to them at the time of the incident. Of the 14 international visitors murdered in 2008–09 and 2009–10, two were killed by an intimate partner (14%), three were killed by a friend or acquaintance (21%), two by an employer or landlord (14%) and in two cases the relationship between victim and offender was missing. In five cases (36%), international visitors were killed by a stranger.

These new data serve as an update to those reported by the Australian Institute of Criminology in 2006 following the murder of three international visitors in 2005 (Venditto & Mouzos 2006). Of particular interest from this earlier study was that the rate at which Australians were murdered overseas (in the 32 countries for which data was available between 1995 and 2003) was more than six times higher than the rate at which overseas visitors were murdered in Australia (5.7 per million of 0.9 per million; Venditto & Mouzos 2006).

Overall, it was concluded from this research that murders of overseas visitors are ‘a statistically rare event [with] no evidence indicating that overseas visitors are the specific targets of murder in Australia’ (Venditto & Mouzos 2006: 5), a finding that is also reflected in this more recent analysis of homicide deaths.

The NHMP annual report and the Venditto & Mouzos paper can be accessed on the AIC website: www.aic.gov.au

References

All URLs correct at February 2013

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012. *Overseas arrivals and departures*, Australia, Jul 2012. ABS cat. no. 3401.0. Canberra: ABS

Venditto J & Mouzos J 2006. The murder of overseas visitors in Australia. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* no. 316. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <http://aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/tandi/301-320/tandi316.html>