



Australian Government
Australian Institute of Criminology

Homicide in Australia: 2004–05 National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) annual report

Jenny Mouzos
Tina Houliaras

Research and Public Policy Series

No. 72

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GPO Box 2944
Canberra ACT 2601
Tel: (02) 6260 9272
Fax: (02) 6260 9299
Email: front.desk@aic.gov.au
Website: <http://www.aic.gov.au>

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From the Director of the AIC

This report presents findings of the sixteenth year of national homicide data collection, and provides an account of the characteristics of victims and offenders of homicide, as well as the circumstances of the incidents for the 2004–05 financial year. Jurisdictional breakdowns are provided for comparative purposes. The year recorded a total of 249 incidents of homicide, committed by 286 offenders, resulting in 267 victims. The incidence of homicide decreased by 14 percent compared with the previous year and has continued a downward trend since 2002–03.

The NHMP dataset has increasingly been recognised for its wealth of information, and in addition to informing public policy, the data are being used in the strategic direction of police investigations and in the assistance of the prosecution of offenders. It is important to acknowledge the important contribution of police and coronial agencies in the provision of data for the NHMP. Without their continued support, the NHMP and associated research would not be possible.

A full reference list of NHMP publications is at <http://www.aic.gov.au/research/projects/0001-docs.html>.

Toni Makkai
Director
Australian Institute of Criminology

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Disclaimer

This research paper does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Australian Government.

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NHMP: 2004–05 summary

Homicide, as the most serious criminal offence, is a matter of great public interest and concern. Popular television shows can give a misleading impression of homicide, with their focus on homicides involving a male killing another male with a firearm in cold blood over a drug dispute, or a female falling victim to a sexual homicide. What occurs in reality in Australia is quite different. Annual data collections, such as the National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) provide policy makers, law enforcement agencies and the general public with accurate information on the nature of a specific offence, such as homicide.

It has been 16 years since the NHMP began collecting data on Australian homicides. Over this time, the trends and patterns of incidents, victims and offenders of homicide have been monitored. For the most part, the circumstances and characteristics of homicide have remained remarkably stable. There have been some notable changes in the current year however, and the purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot of homicide in Australia for the period 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005, and to highlight these changes.

Many factors come into play in determining whether a homicide will occur, and over time some of these factors are consistent predictors of an elevated risk of victimisation or offending. As in previous years, disputes are the most common motives for homicide; male intimate partners pose the greatest risk to females, whereas males are more likely to meet their death at the hands of a friend or acquaintance. Children are most likely to be killed by a primary caregiver, usually a parent. In the current year there seems to have been a shift in age of victimisation. Persons aged between 35 and 39 years experienced the highest rate of homicide victimisation (rate of 2.6) during 2004–05. In 2003–04, the highest risk of victimisation was for persons aged between 20 and 24 years (rate of 2.4).

Another factor in homicide which has remained consistent over the years is the type of weapon used. Knives and sharp instruments predominate as the preferred weapon, followed by the use of hands and/or feet, and firearms. Since 2000–01, over half of all firearms homicides have been committed with handguns. During 2004–05, handguns accounted for 42 percent of firearms homicides, compared with 53 percent in 2003–04. While very few firearms used in homicide are registered or the offenders licensed, in the most recent year, there has been an increase in licensed persons using registered firearms to commit homicide. One in five offenders who used a firearm was licensed to own the firearm, and 17 percent of the firearms used were registered to the offender.

Most homicides occur in residential premises, a pattern which has remained consistent over the years. Almost two out of five homicide incidents occur on weekends, usually during the hours where people are out socialising or at entertainment venues or facilities. Few homicide incidents occur during the day, especially weekdays. Mondays incur the lowest risk of homicide, with about one in ten homicide incidents occurring on a Monday.

This year has recorded the lowest number of homicide incidents and victims in Australia since the AIC began monitoring in 1989. This continues a downward trend observed in previous years, recording a 14 percent decrease from 2003–04 to 2004–05. The number of victims also declined from 305 victims in 2003–04 to 267 in 2004–05. All jurisdictions except Tasmania, recorded a decrease in homicide victimisation in the current year. Victoria recorded the largest decline in 2004–05, with a total of 55 victims, down from 73 victims in 2003–04, representing a 25 percent decrease from the previous year.

Documenting these changes is extremely important as homicide can be characterised as a fairly reliable barometer of all violent crime, and no other crime in Australia is measured as accurately and precisely. As a data source, the NHMP is recognised both nationally and internationally as one of the pre-eminent homicide data collection programs. It is essential that NHMP data are accessible to, and utilised by, all stakeholders, particularly those who play a key role in the provision of the data, given its central role in identifying homicide patterns and trends. The purpose of this report is to provide accurate and timely data that can:

- inform resource allocations
- guide key strategic, tactical and operational directions (particularly for the police and other related agencies)
- provide the foundation for policy development directions
- identify key knowledge gaps to direct future research.

It is promising that the overall rate of homicide is continuing to decrease. Realistically however, homicide will never be entirely prevented, but it is the goal of public policy makers, researchers and practitioners to develop strategies that continue to reduce it. As with the 2003–04 annual report, this year's report includes a section giving an overview of the types of homicidal encounters in Australia: intimate partner violence, child homicide, homicide between persons known to each other, and stranger-related murders.

Methodology

There are two key sources of data for the NHMP:

- offence records derived from each Australian state and territory police service, supplemented where necessary with information provided directly by investigating police officers, and/or associated staff

- state coronial¹ records such as toxicology and post mortem reports². As of 1 July 2001, the National Coroners Information System (NCIS) has enabled toxicology reports to be accessible online³.

The data are further supplemented by press clippings, which are sorted according to incident and filed with the offence report. Newspaper media nationwide are canvassed on a daily basis by staff at the JV Barry Library. These clippings are then provided to the NHMP.

Information for the NHMP is collected annually on all homicides coming to the attention of police services throughout Australia. There are 77 variables in the NHMP dataset, divided into three key areas: incident data, victim-related data and offender-related data. These are outlined below. The first stage of the data collection process involves obtaining hard copies of police offence reports. These are forwarded directly to the AIC. This process occurs during the months of August and September. Following this, all relevant information relating to the 77 variables is extracted for each homicide incident and entered into a database. In previous years, the data were entered into a SAS database. As of 1 July 2005, all data received by the AIC are housed and analysed in STATA.

Details from the relevant data sources are firstly entered into an Access database using an automated data entry program. Data are then transferred to STATA and arranged into three datasets:

- *incident file*, which describes the case and its circumstances (for example location, date and time of the incident, status of investigation; whether the incident occurred during the course of another crime)
- *victim file*, which contains sociodemographic information relating to the victim/s, details relating to the cause of death, and type of weapon used to kill the victims, alcohol and illicit/prescription drug use
- *offender file*, which relates to persons who have been charged and includes data on the sociodemographic characteristics of the offender, his/her criminal history, alcohol/illicit drug use, mental health status, and the offender's relationship to the victim.

A merged incident, victim and offender file is also created, combining details from all three datasets.

1 The law in each state and territory requires that all violent and unnatural deaths be reported to the coroner.

2 As of 1 July 1996, additional information relating to whether the victim had consumed alcohol or was under the influence of illicit/prescription drugs at the time of the incident, was also collected from coronial files from each state and territory.

3 The NHMP submitted an ethics application to the Monash University National Centre for Coronial Information (MUNCCI) in order to obtain access to the NCIS. Access was granted on a fee for service basis.

It is important to note that, as data are from police offence reports, the term ‘offender’ refers to alleged or suspected offenders. It does not refer to adjudicated offenders, unless otherwise stated.

Not all information collected by the NHMP is available in police offence reports. In many instances, staff within homicide squads or major crime units track down the missing information through other information sources (usually contacting the investigating officer) and supply it to the NHMP. Without this information, there would be many gaps and questions left unanswered. Ultimately, this demonstrates that the collection of annual homicide data in Australia is a team effort, made possible by the ongoing support of all state and territory police services.

The NHMP has been collecting data since 1989 and is currently in the sixteenth year of data collection, covering the period from 1 July 1989 to 30 June 2005. Included in the dataset are⁴:

- 4,945 homicide incidents
- 5,317 victims
- 5,410 homicide offenders.

The data in this publication may differ slightly from previously published figures because of updates to the data files.

Quality control of data

As homicide is the most extreme offence that can be committed against an individual, it is essential that homicide figures provided by the NHMP are a true reflection of lethal violence in Australia. In order to ensure the accuracy of the data from which homicide in Australia is analysed and quantified, a rigorous quality control process is undertaken.

The NHMP quality control process involves crosschecking information contained in each police offence report of murder and manslaughter with information from the additional data sources. As outlined earlier, these supplementary sources include post mortem reports, information provided by other agencies within the police service (statistical services, homicide squads/major crime units), and press clippings. If a discrepancy arises between information provided in the police offence report and one of the additional sources, then the original source is queried. Depending upon the accuracy of the additional source, and the information provided in response to the NHMP query, the data relating to the homicide incident in the NHMP will be updated accordingly.

4 It should be noted that the size of the files for each homicide incident differs in some instances due to data limitations, and the fact that some cases involve more than one victim and/or offender.

A death may not be recorded in the NHMP as a homicide in cases where there is uncertainty as to whether the death is a murder or manslaughter and the police have referred it for opinion to the Office of Public Prosecutions. If there is still no decision at the time of data collection, and based on advice from the investigating officer, the incident will be excluded.

A report (Mouzos 2002a) detailing the NHMP quality control process provides a comprehensive examination of this process and cites examples of identified inconsistencies in the various data sources. The data discrepancies that arise vary from conflicting data, such as employment status or age, to the identification of cases that have remained on file as they were originally recorded and investigated as homicides but which have subsequently been found to be unsubstantiated or to involve no suspicious circumstances or third party involvement – for example where an individual died from natural causes. This report highlights the quality control mechanisms employed in the data collection, entry and analysis processes, developed to ensure that the information provided to key stakeholders and the general public is an accurate portrayal of this most serious criminal offence.

In addition to the possibility of discrepancies between the various data sources used in the NHMP, there are also some discrepancies between NHMP data and other homicide data produced by other agencies, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). For a discussion on the results from a comparative analysis of the various data sources see Mouzos (2003a).

Definition of homicide

The term *homicide* refers to a person killed, while a *homicide incident* is an event in which one or more persons are killed at the same place and time. Homicide is defined by the criminal law of each Australian state and territory. The specific wording of the definition varies somewhat between jurisdictions in terms of degree, culpability, and intent. For the purposes of the NHMP, the definition of homicide is the operational definition used by police throughout Australia. As such the NHMP collects data on the following incidents:

- all cases resulting in a person or persons being charged with murder or manslaughter (including the charge of 'dangerous act causing death' which applies to the Northern Territory), but excluding other driving-related fatalities, except where these immediately follow a criminal event such as armed robbery or motor vehicle theft
- all murder-suicides classed as murder by the police
- all other deaths classed by the police as homicides (including infanticides), even though no offender has been arrested and charged.

Attempted murder is excluded, as are violent deaths such as industrial accidents involving criminal negligence (unless a charge of manslaughter is laid). Lawful homicide, including incidents involving police in the course of their duties, is also excluded.

Homicide in Australia

The incidence of homicide in Australia continued to decline in 2004–05, recording a 14 percent decrease from the previous year. While the overall number of incidents is small, it is promising to observe that the downward trend has continued in the current year. Time series analysis was conducted on the annual incidence of homicide. Results indicate that the overall trend in the incidence of homicide has remained stable over the 16-year period. In terms of yearly trends, the current year recorded the lowest number of incidents, victims and offenders. The year 2001–02 recorded the highest, with 354 incidents. Attention will be paid in the report to identifying specific factors that have contributed to the recent decline in homicide in Australia.

Homicide incidents

During the 2004–05 reporting period, 249 homicide incidents occurred in Australia⁵. This is 39 fewer homicide incidents occurring in Australia than in the preceding reporting period, a decline of approximately 14 percent. Victoria experienced a 23 percent decline in the number of homicide incidents in 2004–05, compared with the previous year. New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory also experienced declines in the incidence of homicide. In contrast, Tasmania recorded an increase with a total of 10 incidents in 2004–05, up from three incidents in 2003–04. Norfolk Island also recorded a homicide incident during 2004–05. A previous incident was recorded in 2001–02; the first in over forty years.

At the time of data collection it appears that the majority of homicide incidents in Australia result from an act classified as murder (84%), followed by acts deemed as manslaughter (11%), or infanticide (5%). The distinctions between the various degrees of homicide can and do change once an offender has been charged and the matter proceeds to court. Similar to previous years, an offender was identified in the majority of homicide incidents recorded for 2004–05, with an offender yet to be identified in six percent (n=16) of the 249 incidents. The clear-up rate for homicide has improved since the previous year. In 2003–04,

5 This includes five incidents that did not occur during the 2004–05 reporting period, but were recorded by police during this time and one incident occurring in an external Australian territory, Norfolk Island.

14 percent of homicide incidents were unsolved at the time of data collection, compared with only six percent for the current period.

Many characteristics of the homicide incident have remained unchanged over the years. Similar to previous years, most solved homicide incidents (n=233) involved one-on-one interactions between a victim and an offender (81%), 14 percent involved a single victim and multiple offenders, while five percent of incidents involved multiple victims (of which only two of the 12 incidents involved multiple offenders).

A jurisdictional comparison revealed that South Australia, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and Norfolk Island did not record any incidents with multiple victims. Victoria recorded one homicide incident involving four victims. New South Wales recorded six incidents involving more than one victim (four double homicides, and two triple homicides). Queensland recorded three multiple homicide incidents (two double homicides and one triple homicide), and Western Australia recorded two double homicides, followed by Tasmania with one double victim homicide.

Temporal characteristics

Homicides are most likely to occur on weekends and the days leading up to the weekend (Thursdays and Fridays). In 2003–04, homicide incidents commonly occurred on a Thursday (15%), Friday (17%) or Saturday (18%). In 2004–05, however, a higher proportion of homicides occurred on Sundays (19%), or Saturdays (18%), than the remaining days of the week. Over the years, these days, particularly Saturday, have been the days of the week that are consistent risk markers for homicide. There are a number of possible explanations for this pattern. In terms of leisure activities, people tend to socialise on a Friday or Saturday evening. Given that homicide is a social interaction requiring two or more persons to come together, it makes sense that the days in which social interactions increase are also those in which a homicide is most likely to occur.

These patterns are fairly consistent across the jurisdictions. A higher proportion of homicide incidents occurred on a Saturday and/or Sunday than all other days in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, and the Australian Capital Territory. While the numbers are low in Western Australia, a different pattern emerges, with Sundays and Fridays as the days homicide incidents are least likely to occur.

The same explanation regarding the day of the week on which most homicide incidents occur applies to the time of day that most homicide incidents occur. In Australia, 70 percent of homicide incidents usually occur during the 12-hour period of 6 pm to 6 am. Less than a third of homicide incidents occurred during 6 am to 6 pm.

As reported elsewhere, there are contradictory findings on the link between homicide and seasonality (Anderson 1987; Cheatwood 1995, 1988; Land, McCall & Cohen 1990; Mouzos 2005; Tennenbaum & Fink 1994). A seasonal analysis of the homicide incident data for 2004–05 indicates that a higher proportion of homicide incidents occurred during summer (31%) than during winter (25%), autumn (23%) or spring (20%).

The location of homicide incidents is another consistent pattern found in the data. Over the years, the majority of homicide incidents have occurred at residential premises. In 2004–05, almost two-thirds of the homicide incidents occurred in a residential location (63%), while a further 22 percent occurred in a street or open area; decreasing from 30 percent in the previous year. This pattern was consistent for the majority of jurisdictions, with a higher proportion of homicide incidents occurring in a residential location in the larger jurisdictions such as Victoria (73%), and New South Wales (66%). Queensland (57%), South Australia (60%) and Western Australia (54%) also recorded more than half of all incidents occurring in a residential location. In the smaller jurisdictions, such as Tasmania, nine out of the 10 incidents reported occurred in a residential location. The Northern Territory reported an equal proportion of incidents occurring at residential premises (42%) and on a street or open area (42%).

In some cases, the death of the victim is the unintended consequence of another crime, for example a break and enter or a robbery. During 2004–05, 57 incidents (24%) occurred in conjunction with another crime, an increase from 39 incidents for the previous year. Over one in five of these instrumental homicides originated in a drug offence (23%) or arson (21%), with others being robbery (14%) or break and enter (12%). The current period also shows an increase in arson offences, up from three percent (n=1) in 2003–04 to 21 percent (n=12) in 2004–05. Compared with the previous year, a decrease in robbery offences is also evident, down from 31 percent (n=12) to 14 percent (n=8). In cases of robbery-murder, the amount sought by the offender does not necessarily have to be substantial, as in the case where a squatter was murdered for \$20 (case no. 19/05).

It is important to note that while a number of incidents have been identified as occurring in the course of another crime, it is difficult to determine whether the 'other crime' precipitated the homicide or whether the homicide was committed due to unexpected situational factors that arose, to cover up the other crime, or whether in fact the homicide was the primary intention with another crime being committed immediately preceding or following the homicide. For example, in one incident the victim was killed when he confronted two intruders in his home (case no. 152/05). In another case, in an attempt of aggravated (person) robbery, the victim shot the offender by way of self defence (case no.007/05). In an incident of road rage, a driver was inadvertently killed when the offender confronted the driver, punching him during the altercation, resulting in the death of the victim (case no. 051/05).

Arson is another good example, with fire being used to cover up the act of murder. However, in such incidents both the absence of soot in the airway, and toxicological analysis of blood taken from the victim can reveal the absence of products of combustion (that is, the cocktail of chemicals usually present in smoke; Moore 2004), indicating that the victim was not alive at the time of the fire, and that there is a high possibility the fire was started to cover up the victim's murder (case nos 024/05 and 245/05).

Homicide victims

Homicide victimisation in 2004–05 occurred at a rate of 1.3 per 100,000 Australians and was the lowest recorded rate since the inception of the NHMP in 1990. As noted, compared with the previous year, the number of homicide victims in Australia decreased 13 percent, from 305 victims in 2003–04 to 267 victims of homicide in 2004–05. Over the 16-year period, the rate of homicide has fluctuated by a rate of 0.7 per 100,000 persons, ranging from a low of 1.3 to a high of 2.0 per 100,000 of the population. A jurisdictional comparison revealed that New South Wales, Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory recorded a homicide victimisation rate lower than the national average. Tasmania recorded an increase in its victimisation rate for the current year, with a homicide rate of 2.3 per 100,000 Tasmanians; increasing from 0.6 in the previous year (although the overall number of homicides is still quite small).

The victimisation rate for the Northern Territory remains unchanged (rate of 6.0; n=12) for the current year compared with the previous year. It is still greater than the national average, although it has decreased from 11.5 in 2001–02 to 8.6 in 2002–03 and stabilised at a rate of 6 per 100,000 population in 2003–04 and 2004–05, four times the national rate.

Demographics

The risk of homicide victimisation is not the same for all Australians. The existence of national databases such as the NHMP allows for the identification of risk markers, and determination of whether the risk markers are static or whether they are fluid or dynamic.

A phenomenon that is consistently supported by the annual NHMP data and by international homicide victimisation research is the gendered nature of homicide; men are most commonly the victims of homicide (Brookman 2005; Flowers 2002; Miethe & Regoeczi 2004; Mouzos 2003b, 2002a, 2000; Mouzos & Segrave 2004; Polk 1994). During 2004–05, males accounted for 67 percent of homicide victims, at a rate of 1.8 per 100,000 of the male population, twice the rate of female homicide victimisation (0.9 per 100,000 of the female population). Compared with the previous year, the number of male and female victims of homicide both decreased by a rate of 0.2 per 100,000 of the Australian population. The decrease in homicide victimisation was largely driven by the decrease

in male victims. In South Australia for example, there was a 40 percent decrease in the number of male homicide victims, from 20 in 2003–04 to 12 in 2004–05. Overall, in 2004–05 there was an eight percent decrease in the number of male victims of homicide in Australia, compared with 2003–04, and a 20 percent decrease in the number of female victims.

Homicide victimisation at the jurisdictional level tends to vary somewhat from the national overview of victimisation. Compared with the national average, a greater proportion of females were the victims of homicide in Western Australia (n=12; 41%), South Australia (n=8; 40%) and Northern Territory (n=5; 42%) whereas males accounted for a higher proportion of victims in Victoria and Queensland (n=39 each; 70% respectively), and Tasmania (n=8; 72%). Throughout the section outlining the 2004–05 findings, there is one victim excluded from any gendered analysis. This is because of an incident involving one victim, an unborn baby (foetus) whose gender was not recorded in police offence reports.

Similar to gender, age is a variable that has remained relatively consistent over the 16-year period. The mean age of homicide victims during 2004–05 was 36 years; one year older than the mean age of victims in the previous year. There was little gender differentiation in terms of the mean age. Male victims were slightly older (mean age of 37 years) than female victims (mean age of 35 years). With the exception of the smaller jurisdictions that recorded very few homicides, female victims in South Australia were older than their state counterparts (mean age of 44 years).

It was noted in the 2003–04 NHMP annual report (Mouzos 2005), that the risk of homicide victimisation is shifting more towards younger persons, with those aged 20 to 24 years most at risk of victimisation (rate of 2.4). For the year 2004–05 however, victimisation has shifted to much older persons, with those aged 35 to 39 years most at risk of victimisation (rate 2.6). This is a marked change which may be because of the divergence in victimisation for males and females. For example, males aged 40 to 44 years had the highest risk of victimisation (rate of 3.5), whereas females aged between birth and four years were most at risk of homicide victimisation (rate of 1.9) as well as females aged 35 to 39 years (rate of 1.9). As observed for a number of previous years (Mouzos 2003b), persons who are most vulnerable, such as the very young and elderly tend to experience a high rate of victimisation. In 2004–05, persons aged less than five years recorded a homicide victimisation rate of 2.2 per 100,000 and persons aged 80 years and older experienced a victimisation rate of 1.0 per 100,000. Similar to the previous year, a total of 14 infants (aged less than one year) were killed in 2004–05, of whom five were killed in New South Wales and four in Victoria. There was also an incident involving the death of an unborn child (foetus) (case no. 219/05). Incidentally, with the recent introduction of legislation in New South Wales criminalising the killing of an unborn child, South Australia is the only remaining jurisdiction with no legislation governing the killing of an unborn child in certain circumstances (non medical procedure).

In addition to gender, race is considered to be one of the best known correlates of violent crime (Haynie & Armstrong 2006). However, few jurisdictions publish data in relation to risk of victimisation based on ethnicity or country of birth⁶. This is mainly to avoid an undue focus on ethnicity in the absence of other factors. The NHMP does collect information on the racial appearance of both victims and offenders. These data are derived from police records and are only indicative of the racial appearance of the victim and offender, and in most cases this is based on a subjective assessment made by police. As a result caution should be exercised in the interpretation of data in relation to racial appearance. The majority of homicide victims in Australia during 2004–05 were of Caucasian appearance (81% males; 76% females), a finding that is consistent across the 16 years. Overall, Indigenous persons accounted for 14 percent of homicide victims, followed by victims of Asian appearance at six percent. The Northern Territory, with the highest proportion of Indigenous inhabitants, also recorded the highest proportion of Indigenous homicide victims. Almost three in five male victims and all the female victims in the Northern Territory were Indigenous.

Given the gendered nature of homicide, differences have also been noted in the sociodemographic characteristics of male and female victims (and offenders) (Brookman 2005; Flowers 2002; Miethe & Regoeczi 2004; Mouzos 2003b; Polk 1994). The following gender differentials were noted in homicide victimisation during 2004–05. Compared with female homicide victims, male homicide victims were more likely to be:

- single at the time of the incident (45%)
- employed (39%)
- involved in prior criminal activities (48%).

In contrast, female homicide victims at the time of the offence were:

- more likely to be married or in a de facto relationship (54%)
- less likely to be employed (35%)⁷
- less likely to be involved in prior criminal activities (25%).

In general, however, the data indicate that while the proportion of homicide victims may fluctuate from year to year, the groups within the population most at risk of victimisation have changed very little.

6 Of all state and territory police services, only two (Victoria and Western Australia) publish data on racial appearance and/or country of birth.

7 Employed does not include those victims whose employment status was recorded as domestic duties which accounted for 21% (n=13) of all female victims and less than one percent for males (n=1).

Precipitating factors

There is some debate as to whether the consumption of alcohol and/or illicit drugs prior to the homicide incident can be considered a precipitating factor. With the use of toxicology results, it can be determined whether the victim had consumed alcohol and/or illicit drugs prior to the homicide. This information cannot indicate how the person was affected physiologically (unless the amount consumed was at a relatively high level) or whether the person's alcohol or drug taking directly precipitated the homicide. A prime example is cannabis. Toxicology reports may indicate the presence of cannabis (THC – 11nor9carboxydelta9tetrahydrocannabinol) in blood or urine, but this can be detected in urine from several to 30 days on average post use (Makkai 2000). While there was information for several incidents indicating the offender committed the offence while under a drug induced psychosis (for example case nos 003/05 and 105/05), it is nevertheless problematic in assuming a cause and effect relationship between alcohol/illicit drug use and lethal violence.

Of the 248 homicide victims for whom data were available from toxicology reports and additional records for 2004–05, there were some differences on the basis of the gender of the victim. A higher proportion of female than male victims did not use any substance at the time of the incident (57% versus 50%). However, a higher proportion of female victims tested positive to illicit/prescription drugs following the homicide than male victims (17% versus 13%). This finding corresponds with research from the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program, where a higher proportion of females than males tested positive to methylamphetamines (39% versus 25%), heroin (17% versus 12%), or benzodiazepines (33% versus 19%) during 2005 (Mouzos, Smith & Hind 2006). Alcohol was the most frequently used substance for males (21%), while for females it was either alcohol (17%) or illicit/prescription drugs (17%).

Poly substance use was also observed in a number of cases, as was a high level of alcohol consumption. For example:

- cannabis and alcohol (0.318g/100mL) (case no. 202/05)
- cannabis and amphetamines (case no. 079/05)
- cannabis, amphetamine and alcohol (0.14g/100mL) (0.09g/100mL) (case nos 098/05; 077/05)
- cannabis, opiates and heroin (case no. 43/05)
- amphetamines, morphine and cannabis (case no. 123/05)
- MDMA (ecstasy), amphetamine and alcohol (0.02g/100mL) (case no. 113/05)
- alcohol (0.377g/100mL, approximately six times the legal driving limit), benzodiazepines, diazepam (case no. 052/05).

Information regarding the mental status of the offender and the identification of the offender as suffering from a mental disorder immediately before or at the time of the incident, is contained in police offence reports, which may or may not be based on an official medical diagnosis. Where information was known (n=213), a total of 51 victims were killed by a mentally disordered offender (24%). This is a notable increase over 2003–04, where seven percent of victims were killed by a mentally disordered offender. In one incident, a mentally ill and convicted paedophile murdered his victim only hours after being released from a psychiatric unit (case no. 002/05). In another incident, an offender released from a correctional centre eight days prior to randomly selecting his victim, committed the murder because he simply 'wanted to kill someone' (case no. 164/05).

Human behaviour is complex and is surrounded by a great deal of uncertainty. It is difficult to ascribe a single reason or motive to a homicide when in reality the reasons may be varied and complicated. Some argue that homicide is the result of a series of events (Block & Christakos 1995). Previous research on women as offenders of homicide finds that the reasons women kill depend largely upon who the victim is and the situational context. Similarly, women and men who kill their husbands/wives or de facto partners as a result of a domestic altercation do not always kill under similar circumstances. For example, in one incident, the female offender who allegedly endured many years of abuse and ill treatment from her husband resorted to lethal violence and killed her husband (case no. 118/05). In another incident, a male offender hanged his two children because of a domestic violence order initiated by his ex-partner (the mother of the children) (case no. 247/05). While there may be masked differences underlying the category 'domestic altercation', for classification purposes the main theme is that an argument of a domestic nature precipitated the homicide, and/or there is a general deterioration of the relationship.

The most commonly identified motive (the alleged causal factor that precedes and often leads to the events in which the outcome is the death of the victim or victims) ascribed to male homicide victims was some type of argument or altercation involving alcohol, drugs or money or other reason (49%). In these types of homicides, the death of the victim was an outcome of an argument between two or more persons which rapidly escalated to violence. These homicides typically involve young men in public settings who use violence as a form of social control (Innes 2003; Polk 1994).

Arguments over money or homicides to acquire money can occur in many situations. In one case during this period, a son murdered his father to get his share of a substantial inheritance (case no. 067/05).

In a third of homicides involving a male victim, the motive was unclear, while seeking revenge for a perceived wrongdoing accounted for nine percent of homicides with male victims. In comparison, the events leading to female victimisation differed greatly (Frye et al. 2005). During 2004–05, the majority of female victims (44%) were killed as a result of a domestic

altercation (which includes arguments that arise based on jealousy, separation or termination of a relationship, and other domestic arguments that may relate to infidelity, children and custody issues, alcohol fuelled domestic altercations and other issues between intimate or past-intimate partners). Many of these homicides are not committed in 'cold blood', but are rather 'hot-blooded' episodes occurring in 'emotionally charged' circumstances (Innes 2003: 4).

A further 36 percent of female victims died in circumstances where there was no apparent motive, while 22 percent died as a result of an argument fuelled by alcohol or over money or drugs, or other argument.

While it may be presumed that the best interests of the victim are inconsequential to the offender, especially at the time of the offence, in some cases offenders have taken it upon themselves to kill another person on compassionate grounds. This is particularly in homicide cases where the motive is euthanasia, a subject of much controversy and public debate. There were three such cases during 2004–05.

Weapons/methods

The weapons/methods used in the commission of homicide have remained relatively unchanged over the years. The most common types of weapons used in homicide in Australia are weapons of opportunity, such as hands and/or feet, and knives. Apart from a couple of years in the early nineties where assaultive force (hands and/or feet) was the predominant method used, a knife or sharp instrument is the most common type of weapon used to kill in Australia, accounting for 31 percent of homicide victims in 2004–05, a similar proportion to 2003–04. The use of hands/feet (assaultive force) is the second most common method, with 22 percent of victims beaten to death. Persons killed with a firearm in 2004–05 accounted for 15 percent of victims, a decline from 17 percent in 2003–04.

These patterns tend to differ based on the gender of the victim (Mouzos 2002a; 2003b). It was reported in 2003–04 that males were more likely to be killed with a knife or sharp instrument (39%) followed by a firearm (21%). However, in 2004–05, the proportion of males killed with a firearm declined, with a firearm becoming the third most common weapon used, accounting for 19 percent of male victims.

Compared with the previous year where females were more likely to be beaten to death (32% in 2003–04), in 2004–05, females were more likely to be killed with a knife or sharp instrument (37%), followed by being beaten to death with hands and/or feet (27%). Fewer than one in ten females were killed with a firearm in 2004–05.

In 2003–04, 53 victims (17%) were killed with a firearm. In the most recent year, 2004–05, 40 victims (15%) were killed with a firearm. Another consistent pattern in homicide in

Australia is that the firearms used are unlawfully held. That is, they are not registered to either the victim or the offender, neither is the victim or offender licensed to own the firearm. During 2004–05, 29 identified offenders⁸ used a firearm to commit homicide. Of these, five used a registered firearm (17%), and six were licensed to own a firearm (21%), an increase from the proportion of offenders registered and licensed in 2003–04 (4% and 11% respectively). Nine victims (an increase from two) were killed with a firearm licensed to them, and two victims were killed with a firearm registered to them.

Since 2000–01, over half of all firearms homicides have been committed with handguns. During 2004–05, handguns accounted for 42 percent of firearms homicides (excludes two homicides where details of the type of firearm used was unavailable), compared with 53 percent in 2003–04. Of the sixteen handguns used to commit homicide during 2004–05, one was registered to the victim and another to the offender. Two offenders were licensed to own the handguns. Four offenders used a handgun to commit murder-suicide. Three handgun homicides were unsolved at the time of data collection.

A further examination of firearms homicides suggests that they are different from homicide in general. Of the 40 firearms homicides in Australia during 2004–05, six involved the murder of more than one victim (15%). Almost two-thirds occurred in a residential location, and a quarter took place in the street or open area. Two-thirds of the solved firearms homicides involved a male victim and offender (66%). As in the previous year, there was only one firearm homicide that occurred between a female victim and offender. Over a quarter of the solved firearms homicides occurred between strangers (27%), and a further 22 percent occurred between friends and acquaintances. Not surprisingly given the low level of legal ownership of firearms among those involved in homicide, 69 percent of offenders had a criminal history, compared with 40 percent of victims.

Homicide offenders

There were 286 offenders identified in Australia for 2004–05 as being involved in the 233 homicide incidents⁹. The majority of offenders were male (84%; n=239), who offended at a rate of 2.4 per 100,000, which is about five times the rate of females (0.5 per 100,000). Such gender disparities are consistent with the findings from the NHMP over the past 16 years and with international homicide research (Brookman 2005; Flowers 2002; Miethe & Regoeczi 2004; Mouzos 2000; 2002a; 2003b; Mouzos & Segrave 2004).

8 The licensing and registration details of five cases were not available. Five firearms homicides were unsolved at the time of data collection.

9 Of the 249 homicide incidents that occurred during 2004–05, 16 were unsolved, meaning that no offender had been identified at the time of data collection.

Demographics

During 2004–05, homicide offenders were slightly younger than their victims, with the mean age of offenders being 34 years and a mean age of 36 years for homicide victims. The mean age of female offenders was 36 years, compared with the mean age of 33 years for male offenders. The youngest offender recorded in 2004–05 was aged 14 years and the oldest offender was 86 years. In terms of the age range of offenders, males have a longer offending career – they are likely to begin offending earlier than females (the youngest male was 14 years; the youngest female was 17 years) and to cease offending later than females (the oldest male was 86 years; the oldest female was 61 years).

While there were some pattern shifts in terms of age of victimisation during the current year, offending patterns remained similar to previous years. The rate of offending for males peaked in the early to mid twenties, with 20–24 year old males offending at a rate of 6.5 per 100,000 males. From the age of 15 to 49 years, the rate of offending ranged between 3.1 and 6.5 for males. For female offenders the patterns are quite different. The highest rate of homicide offending for females was for those aged 30–34 years (1.3 per 100,000), followed by women aged 40–44 years (rate of 1.2 per 100,000). As in previous years, the highest rate of female offending occurred at a slightly older age than for males, although female offending is distributed across a narrower range of age groups.

The social context of most homicides suggests that they are usually likely to occur between persons who are generally from similar backgrounds and socioeconomic groups (Chamlin & Cochran 2005; Polk 1994). In terms of racial appearance¹⁰, the majority of homicide offenders were of Caucasian appearance (71%). More females (77%) than males (70%) were of Caucasian appearance. Over the past few years, the level of Indigenous offending has remained stable at the national level (about 19%). The majority of Indigenous offenders were recorded in Queensland (n=12) followed by Western Australia (n=11) and the Northern Territory (n=9). As a proportion of offenders within each jurisdiction, however, offenders of Indigenous appearance accounted for the greatest proportion of offenders in the Northern Territory (nine out of 13 offenders; 18% of all homicide offenders in Australia). While the distribution of offenders according to ethnicity is similar to the distribution of victims, there are some important shifts to note particularly when considering racial appearance by the gender of the offender. A greater proportion of Indigenous women committed homicide than men (21% compared with 17%), a finding that is consistent with previous years. While there were 40 Indigenous male offenders, and 10 female Indigenous offenders, the proportion of female Indigenous offenders represents just

10 It is important to note that as with the racial appearance of homicide victims, the data do not accurately reflect the ethnicity of the offenders. Rather they are an indication of racial appearance based on the subjective interpretation of police and thus interpretations from any findings must be made with caution.

under a quarter of the total female offending population, while Indigenous women account for only approximately two percent of the total female population in Australia¹¹.

About half of the homicide offenders during 2004–05 were single at the time of the incident (48%), but the distribution of homicide offenders according to marital status differed according to the gender of the offender, reflecting the distribution of victims according to marital status. While the majority of male offenders were unmarried (51%), female offenders were more likely to be married or in a de facto relationship at the time the offence occurred (52%). A third of the female offenders were single at the time of the homicide incident. Compared with the previous year, this represents a decrease in the proportion of single women engaging in homicide, and an increase in the proportion of women in relationships as offenders.

The majority of offenders were unemployed at the time of the offence (68%). A third of male offenders were employed at the time of the incident, compared with 26 percent of female offenders (although it is also worth noting that the employment status of 14 percent of women was recorded as domestic duties at the time of the offence).

Precipitating factors

Just over half of the homicide offenders arrested and charged for incidents committed during 2004–05, (52%) had consumed alcohol (33%), illicit or prescription drugs (12%) or both (7%) at the time of the incident. In 2004–05, a greater proportion of female offenders than male offenders had consumed alcohol prior to the homicide (45% versus 30%). The opposite pattern occurred in 2003–04, where more male offenders than female offenders had consumed alcohol. A higher proportion of females had consumed both alcohol and illicit/prescription drugs than males (12% versus 6%). These findings are similar to those reported for victims, and in accord with research on drug use by police detainees (Mouzos, Smith & Hind 2006). Results of drug testing of police detainees indicate that those detained for a violent offence tested positive to a range of drugs, including methylamphetamine (22%), cannabis (52%), heroin (8%), or benzodiazepines (18%). Almost two-thirds of these detainees tested positive to any drug (64%; Mouzos, Smith & Hind 2006). Other research examining the link between weapons, drugs and crime found that police detainees who had used a knife or a knife and a firearm to commit a crime were more likely than detainees who did not use a weapon to commit a crime to be charged with a violent offence in the 12 months prior to participation in the DUMA program (Mouzos & Borzycki 2006).

In relation to the NHMP data, it is important to keep in mind that these data are indicative only of whether the offender had consumed alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drugs prior

11 Based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census of population & housing: Indigenous profile (ABS 2002).

to the incident; they are not necessarily indicative of the offender's state of mind, nor can it be identified as a causal factor in the homicide incident, particularly as there is no accurate measure of the amount of any substance that had been consumed by the offender (unless the offender suicided after the homicide, for obvious reasons, toxicology reports are not available for the offender).

Of the 286 known offenders during 2004–05, 17 (15 males and two females) committed suicide prior to or following arrest (6%). In relation to criminal history, 70 percent of both male and female offenders had a criminal history, a much higher proportion than male and female victims.

Similar to 2003–04 results, in 13 percent of homicides either the victim or the offender had a history of domestic violence. There were seven homicides that involved a legal intervention order (current or expired).

Relationship between the victim and offender

A key factor in better understanding the contextual dynamics of the homicide event is the identification of the relational distance between the offender and the victim. The relationship between the victim and the offender provides salient information on the social dynamics that link the offender and the victim and the social context within which the homicide occurs. It also contributes important knowledge about incident patterns and potential risk markers for homicide in Australia and can guide the development of targeted prevention policies and initiatives.

Previous NHMP research has indicated that the proportion of homicides involving friends or acquaintances increased during the late 1990s. In 2001–02, the proportion of homicides between friends and acquaintances began to decline and continued to decline in 2002–03, accounting for 31 percent of homicides. In 2003–04, 34 percent of homicides occurred between friends and acquaintances, and in 2004–05, the proportion returned to 31 percent. Intimate partner homicides accounted for a further 22 percent, followed by 18 percent for family homicides. About one out of five homicides in Australia during 2004–05 was committed by strangers (19%), a decrease from 23 percent in the previous year.

A jurisdictional comparison revealed that while the patterns reflect the findings at the national level, there was some variation. Compared with the national average of 19 percent, a higher proportion of stranger homicides occurred in Victoria (25%), Queensland (27%) and South Australia (28%), whereas in Western Australia, 36 percent of homicides involved intimate partners, and only four percent involved strangers.

The decline in victimisation in Victoria was highlighted earlier. Comparing the years 2003–04 and 2004–05 for the relationship between the victim and the offender reveals that in Victoria

there seem to have been some slight changes in the composition of homicides in the current year. Proportionately, intimate partner homicides have stabilised (19% in 2003–04 and 20% in 2004–05), and family homicides have increased from 12 percent to 20 percent. The largest declines observed in Victoria have been in homicides involving non-family members. Homicides between friends and/or acquaintances decreased from 32 percent in 2003–04 to 19 percent in 2004–05. Stranger homicides also declined from 31 percent in 2003–04 to 25 percent in 2004–05.

Analysing victim–offender relationships based on the gender of the offender reveals the disparate circumstances in which males and females are most likely to be offenders or victims of homicide. During 2004–05, male offenders were most likely to kill a friend or acquaintance (32%) and male victims were most likely to be killed by a friend or acquaintance (38%). In comparison, women were most likely to kill those closest to them (66%), with an equal proportion killing intimates and family members (33% each). A lower proportion of women killed a family member during 2004–05 than in 2003–04 (33% versus 43%; Mouzos 2005). Likewise, women were most likely to be killed by an intimate partner (57%) or a family member (17%). Men were far more likely to kill (22%) or be killed (26%) by a person unknown to them than female offenders or victims – four females killed a stranger (8%), while two percent of female victims were killed by a stranger.

Homicidal encounters

Homicide does not occur in a vacuum. There are many factors that come into play to increase the likelihood that a homicide will occur. The following section examines in greater detail the circumstances and characteristics of some of the homicidal encounters during 2004–05.

Intimate partner homicide

There is some debate about the definition of intimate partners and whether boy/girlfriends should be included in the overall counts for intimate partner homicide. For the purposes of the NHMP, intimate partners include: spouse, separated spouse, divorced spouse, de facto, ex-de facto, extra-marital lover/former lover, boyfriend, girlfriend, homosexual relationship, and former homosexual relationship.

During 2004–05, a total of 66 intimate partner homicides occurred, down from 71 in 2003–04. Three-quarters of intimate partner homicides involved a male killing his female partner. Previous research has identified that both men and women living in de facto relationships are at a greater risk of intimate partner homicide than married couples (Mouzos & Shackelford 2004; Shackelford & Mouzos 2005). Just over half of the intimate partner homicides in

2004–05 occurred between current or separated de facto partners. There were three intimate partner homicides between persons in same-sex relationships.

Given the private nature of intimate partner homicides, almost three-quarters occurred in residential locations, with only eight intimate partner homicides having occurred in a street or open area/waterway (12%). This finding illustrates the particular difficulty that policy makers and law enforcement officers are faced with when trying to devise strategies to address violence within the home.

Considering the characteristics of intimate partner homicides, the data show that over half of the intimate partner homicides committed by a male offender involved the killing of a younger partner. When females killed their partners, they were more likely to kill a partner in the same age group (50%) or older (37%). Over half of the intimate partner homicides involved a victim and an offender in the same age group. Out of the 66 intimate partner homicides, 16 or 24 percent involved either an Indigenous victim or offender, or both an Indigenous victim and offender. Most of the Indigenous intimate partner homicides also involved the victim, the offender or both under the influence of alcohol (87%; n=14), whereas only 21 percent of non-Indigenous intimate partner homicides involved the consumption of alcohol. Overall, almost a third of intimate partner homicides involved both the victim and the offender having consumed alcohol just prior to the incident. One in ten intimate partner homicides involved both parties having consumed illicit/prescription drugs just prior to the incident.

Much previous research has found that a history of domestic violence is common in intimate partner homicides, and that in some cases, the homicide incident is the end result of a culmination of numerous prior incidents of domestic violence (Arias & Pape 1999; Browne 1997; Goetting 1995; Jurik & Winn 1990; Mouzos 2003c). A history of domestic violence was recorded in 38 out of the 66 intimate partner homicides (58%) that occurred during 2004–05. This was an increase from 44 percent recorded during 2003–04. In six intimate partner homicides in 2004–05, a current or expired legal intervention order was or had been in place. For example, there was a lengthy history throughout the relationship for domestic violence in a case where the female stabbed her partner (case no. 035/05). Given the physical differences between men and women in terms of strength, it is not surprising to find that not one female killed an intimate partner by beating him to death with her hands and/or feet, whereas 22 percent of men beat their intimate partners to death. Male victims were more likely to be killed with a knife or sharp instrument (69%) by their female partners. In one incident the female, motivated by allegations that her intimate partner had indecently assaulted her daughter, attended a hotel bar in possession of a knife, located her intimate partner and stabbed him repeatedly (case no. 037/05). In another case the intimate partners were involved in a domestic argument which ended with the female using a kitchen knife to murder her partner (case no. 170/50).

Child homicide

There is probably no other crime that attracts more public condemnation and media attention than the murder of a child. As outlined earlier in this report, there were 32 children less than 15 years killed (including an unborn baby). Fourteen of the 32 child homicides involved the death of infants aged less than 12 months. There was a slight variation in the gender distribution of the victims, with 19 of the 31 children being male and the remaining 12 victims being female (the gender of the unborn baby was not recorded). Three of the children killed were Indigenous, a decline from eight in the previous year.

The overwhelming majority of child homicides were committed by a family member (81%), usually a parent (26 out of 32). Thirteen homicides involved the mother killing her child. There were no children killed by persons not known to them. This is in contrast to the public fear that children are in danger of being abducted and murdered. Seven children were killed in murder-suicides and there were no unsolved child homicides.

Eighty-four percent of the child homicides occurred in a residential location, with only one child killed in an open area/waterway. In relation to the type of weapon/method used in the child homicides, the data indicate that compared with the previous year where 10 of the 34 children were killed with a knife or sharp instrument, followed by hands or feet (n=9) or some other method (n=9), during 2004–05 there was only one child killed with a knife or sharp instrument. Half of the children were beaten to death with hands and/or feet (50%; n=16). Three children were killed with a firearm and another three children were given lethal dosages of illicit drugs. In one case, the offender administered a lethal dose of methadone into a drink of cordial in order to 'calm the unsettled child' (case no. 045/05).

Homicide between persons known to each other

Most homicides in Australia occur between persons who are known to each other. Two out of five homicides in 2004–05 involved the falling out of friends or acquaintances or persons in other relationships, such as business associates, neighbours or employees/employers. The majority of these homicides involve male on male confrontations (78%; n=94). There were five homicides between females who were known to each other. A further 13 homicides involved males killing their female friends or acquaintances. Almost half of these homicides involved an offender killing someone older than them (45%), with a further 36 percent of offenders killing someone within their own age group.

Almost three-quarters of these homicides occurred at a residential location (73%), with a further 16 percent occurring in a street or open area/waterway. A total of 34 homicides in this category occurred during the course of another crime. Twelve homicides originated in drug offences and a further nine homicides originated in property offences.

Arguments and altercations for a variety of reasons (56%) including money or drugs (25%) or seeking revenge for a perceived wrongdoing (9%) are common motives for homicides between known persons. Alcohol related arguments led to slightly less than one in ten homicides between friends and acquaintances (8%). Just over half of these homicides also involved the victim, or the offender or both under the influence of alcohol prior to the incident (53%). Gang involvement was indicated in a total of three homicides.

Many of these confrontational or conflict resolution homicides between known persons involved the use of a knife or sharp instrument (31%), or a blunt instrument (26%). A further 16 percent involved the use of assaultive force (hands and/or feet). Firearms were used in 13 percent of these homicides.

Examples of homicides between persons known to each other include one incident between neighbours that was fuelled by alcohol with no specific motive ascribed to the incident (case no. 010/05). In another case involving a co-worker/colleague, a restaurant manager with a gambling addiction murdered the restaurant bookkeeper after stealing some of the profits generated by the restaurant (case no. 159/05). In another case the victim was dismembered by two acquaintances and his girlfriend after an argument erupted within the group (case no. 214/05).

Stranger homicide

The last category of homicides to be examined is those that involved persons with little or no prior knowledge of each other. There were 57 stranger homicides committed in Australia during 2004–05, down from 73 in the previous year. Male on male violence accounted for nine out of ten stranger homicides. There were four female offenders involved in the killing of persons not known to them. Strangers are also more likely to kill a person older than them. Seventy percent of offenders were aged between 18 and 34 years, compared with 40 percent of victims. A further nine percent (n=5) of victims killed by strangers were aged 65 years or older. There was one stranger homicide that involved an Indigenous victim and offender. The majority of stranger homicides were intra-racial (56%).

Compared with the previous types of homicidal encounters examined where the majority occurred in a residential location, 32 percent of stranger homicides in 2004–05 occurred in a residential location. Two out of five stranger homicides took place on the street or an open area/waterway (40%). A further 14 percent of stranger homicides occurred at a recreational venue, such as a pub, bar or nightclub. This would explain why 36 percent of the stranger homicides involved both the victim and offender drinking alcohol prior to the homicide incident (14 out of 39, where information on alcohol use was available).

In terms of the motive of stranger homicides, 30 percent of deaths resulted from an argument or altercation in relation to money or drugs. This includes acquiring money for

drugs. A further 12 percent of homicides occurred as a result of the offender seeking revenge for some perceived wrongdoing. Almost two out of five stranger homicides (n=21; 37%) occurred during the course of another crime, usually a robbery (eight out of 21) or some other property offence (six out of 21).

The use of assaultive force (hands and/or feet) was the most common weapon employed by strangers to commit homicide (26%), followed by a blunt instrument (25%) or a firearm (19%). A knife or sharp instrument was one of the least used weapons in stranger homicide, accounting for 14 percent.

A disturbing example of random stranger homicide is the case where the victim, an interstate visitor and student, approached the offenders seeking directions. After directions were given and the victim walked away, with no provocation or apparent motive, the offenders ran him over with their vehicle because 'it seemed a fun thing to do' (case no.199/05).

In sum, the results from the analysis of the 2004–05 data are indicative of the multifaceted nature of homicide and the need to conceptualise homicide as more than simply a violent act that results in the (often unpremeditated) unlawful death of one or more persons, but rather as a series of events or triggers that lead to this tragic outcome. This report has highlighted the circumstances and characteristics of homicides that occurred during 2004–05, with specific reference to identifying the patterns that have changed over time.

The data presented in the report facilitate comparisons across jurisdictions as they have been collected using a consistent methodology. This allows for comparisons over time, and most importantly for tracking trends and for a timely response to issues as they arise. It also allows for the evaluation of programs designed to address some of the underlying risk markers in homicide victimisation and offending.

The results in this report also highlight areas on which intervention and prevention strategies can focus. In recent years, there has been a concerted effort by the Australian Government to effect change in relation to domestic violence by increasing the public's awareness that domestic violence is a crime and not acceptable (Office for Women 2004). The 'Violence against women: Australia says no' campaign was launched in June 2004 and comprises:

- awareness raising through TV, cinema, magazine and washroom advertising
- specific Indigenous and non-English speaking advertising in the ethnic and Indigenous press
- immediate practical support through a national 24 hour 7 days a week confidential helpline. Anyone, whether victim or perpetrator, friend or family, can call for support, counselling and referral

- a curriculum resource which was distributed free of charge to all secondary schools in 2005. This educational kit targets year 11 and 12 students and is a preventative tool aimed at educating young people about violence in relationships. It features the documentary 'Loves me, loves me not', about a young girl brutally beaten by her boyfriend
- a booklet was sent to every household in Australia in 2004.

Resource material available from the campaign is provided for young people, parents and the community on identifying and avoiding abusive and violent relationships and where to find assistance (<http://www.australiasaysno.gov.au/index.htm>).

The purpose of examining the details of homicides is to learn about each death. Such information should assist in identifying how law enforcement agencies and professionals can work together to safeguard victims, and to improve on current practices (Great Britain. Home Office 2006). It is important to understand and acknowledge that the dynamics of homicide and therefore the indicators are different for different people.

Further reducing the number of incidents of homicide in Australia is a possibility, but it requires a concerted effort and commitment to understanding and identifying where resources could be employed and the areas that could be targeted. During the most recent year, 2004–05, there was an increase in homicides committed by persons suffering from a mental illness. This trend is worth monitoring, especially since the Government announced its \$1.9 billion contribution to the COAG Mental Health Package in the 2006–07 federal budget. This package includes providing families, schools and health professionals with more support in recognising and addressing mental illness. It also includes new assistance to people who are living with mental illness and their families. It will include a national campaign to raise awareness of the links between illicit drug use and mental illness (for further information see www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/budget2006-healthindex.htm).

Data usage

Homicide data can be used for a variety of purposes. For example, aggregated data at the state or territory level provide police and policy makers with an indication of the level of lethal violence in their jurisdiction, and access to longitudinal patterns in lethal violence. Specifically, the data can be utilised to identify shifts in victimisation or offender trends, or changes in the patterns of the circumstances and characteristics of homicide incidents (such as an increase in offences occurring during the course of another crime).

At the Australian Government level, NHMP data can be used to monitor the effect of initiatives such as the 'Violence against women: Australia says no' education campaign, and increases in funding for mental illness. Data from the NHMP provide important guidance in the development of policy and strategic directions in diverse fields of governance such as community services, policing, mental health, courts and correctional institutions.

NHMP data have been used to provide investigative direction in terms of whether specific homicide incidents fit established patterns. For example, NHMP data were used to determine how common the killing method of manual strangulation was in homicides that occur during the course of a break and enter.

Published reports from the NHMP, in particular the report on contract killings (see Mouzos & Venditto 2003) have also been used as supporting documentation aiding police prosecutions in relation to public interest immunity (*Gee v Magistrates' Court of South Australia & Anor* [2004] SASC 315 (1 October 2004)).

A key function of the NHMP is the communication of the most current data and recent results to key stakeholders, namely state and territory police services, governments at the local, state and federal level, nongovernment organisations, research agencies and the general public.

Requests for NHMP data since its inception have increased steadily and it has become an essential resource drawn upon by a wide range of stakeholders. An indication of the ever-expanding audience to whom NHMP data have been communicated through publications and presentations is given below.

Published material: 2004–05

(see <http://www.aic.gov.au/research/projects/0001-docs.html>)

Mouzos J & Segrave M 2004. *Homicide in Australia: 2003–2004 National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) annual report*. Research and public policy series no. 66. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology

AIC 2005. Homicides in Australia 2003–2004: cause of death. *Crime facts info* no. 108, 11 October

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Presentations

Murder and manslaughter in the ACT: findings from the NHMP. Jenny Mouzos.
ACT Magistrates' Court, Canberra, April 2005

Applying homicide research to policing: thinking outside the square. Jenny Mouzos.
Australian Police Summit, Melbourne, October 2005

An overview of homicide in New South Wales and in Australia: results from the 2003–2004
NHMP annual report. Jenny Mouzos. NSW Homicide Squad Advisory Council Meeting,
Sydney, November 2005

Domestic homicides in Australia: trends and patterns. Jenny Mouzos. Domestic
Violence Liaison Officers' Forum, NSW Police Services/NSW Police College, Goulburn,
September 2004

Murder for hire: an examination of attempted and completed contract killings in Australia.
Jenny Mouzos. NSW Police Intelligence Conference, IFOCUS, December 2004

Examples of agencies and organisations requesting data

- Homicide squads/major crime units in all Australian states and territories
- Other police units in all Australian states and territories
- Australian Government Attorney-General's Department
- Australian Customs Service (ACS)
- New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
- Australian Government Productivity Commission
- Victoria Sentencing Advisory Council
- Victoria Police Services Working Group
- Mental Health Unit, Queensland Health
- Canberra Legal Aid Office
- New Zealand Police Service
- US Department of Health and Human Services
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of Michigan, Flint

- University of Oregon
- Australian National University
- University of New South Wales
- University of Melbourne
- La Trobe University
- Sydney University of Technology
- Griffith University
- University of Queensland
- Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
- Sunday Herald Sun
- Take 5 Magazine

Methodological note

Where rates are presented in the tables that follow (victimisation and offending rates), they have been calculated using the mid-year population for the financial year 2004–05. That is, the *estimated resident population* for states and territories as at December 2004 (ABS 2004. *Australian demographic statistics*, Canberra: ABS. ABS cat. no. 3101.0. December quarter 2004).

Similarly, rates for age and gender (victimisation and offending) have been calculated using the following denominators:

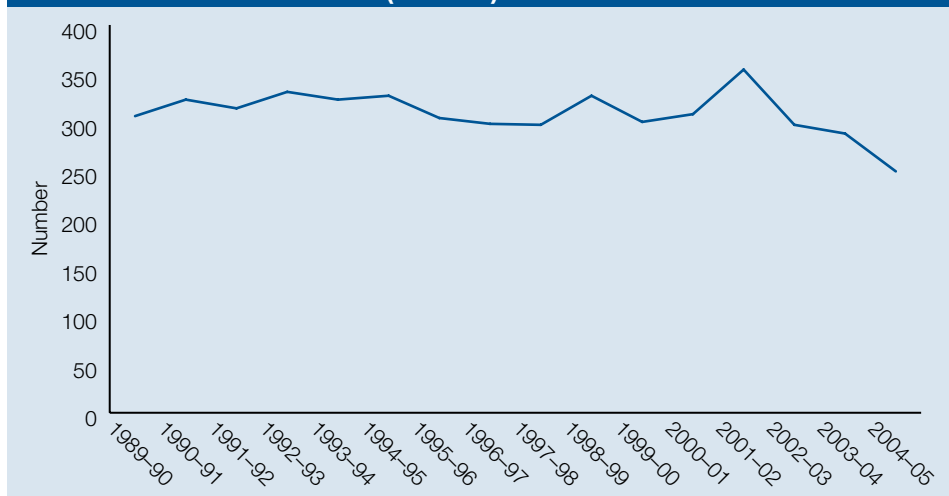
Estimated resident population by sex and age, states & territories of Australia, June 2003 (ABS 2004. *Australian demographic statistics*, ABS cat. no. 3201.0. December quarter 2003).

Some column percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

NHMP: 2004–05 findings

Incident characteristics

Trends in homicide incidents (number)

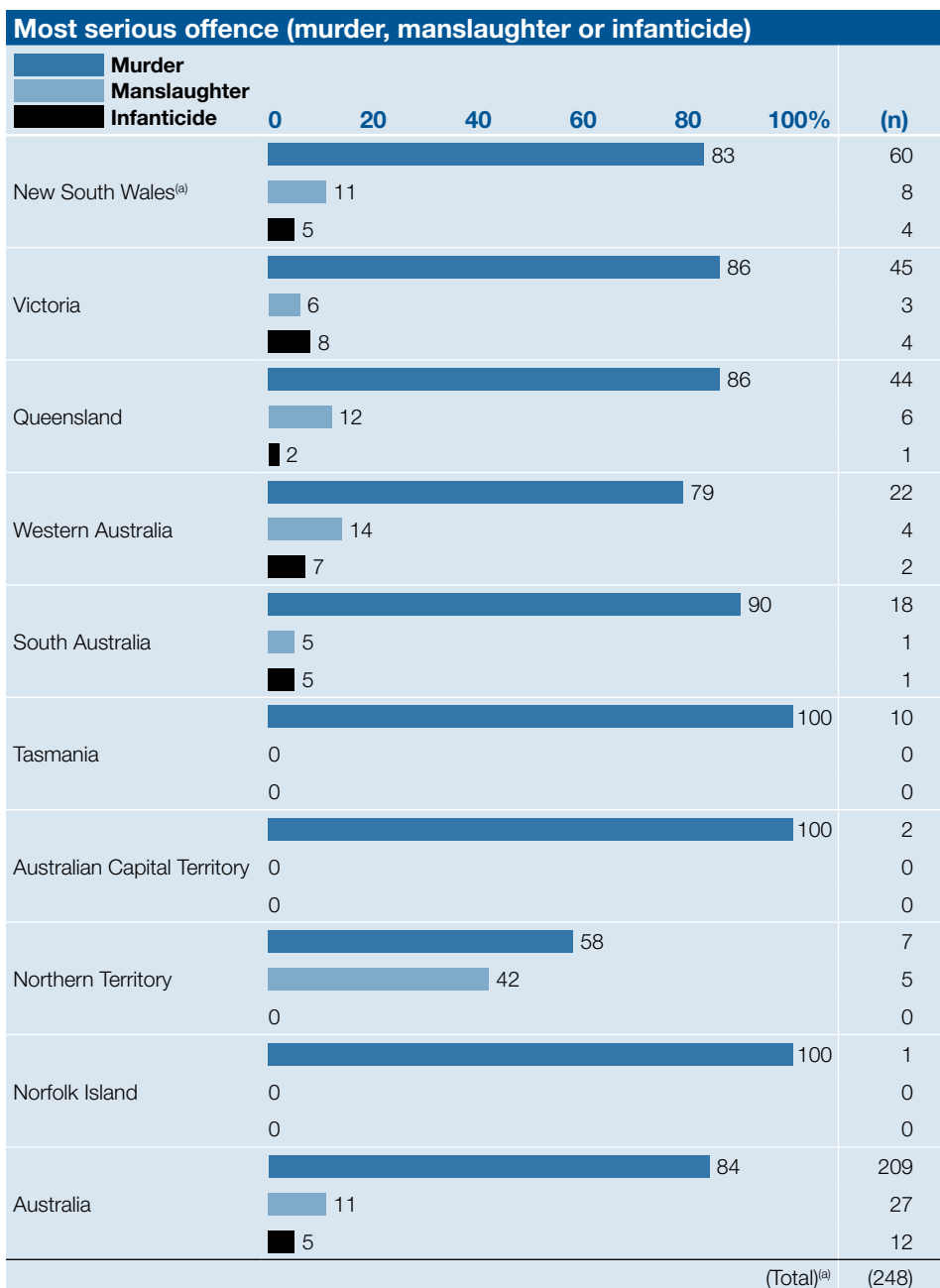


Source: AIC, NHMP 1989–90 to 2004–05 [computer file]

Incidence of homicide

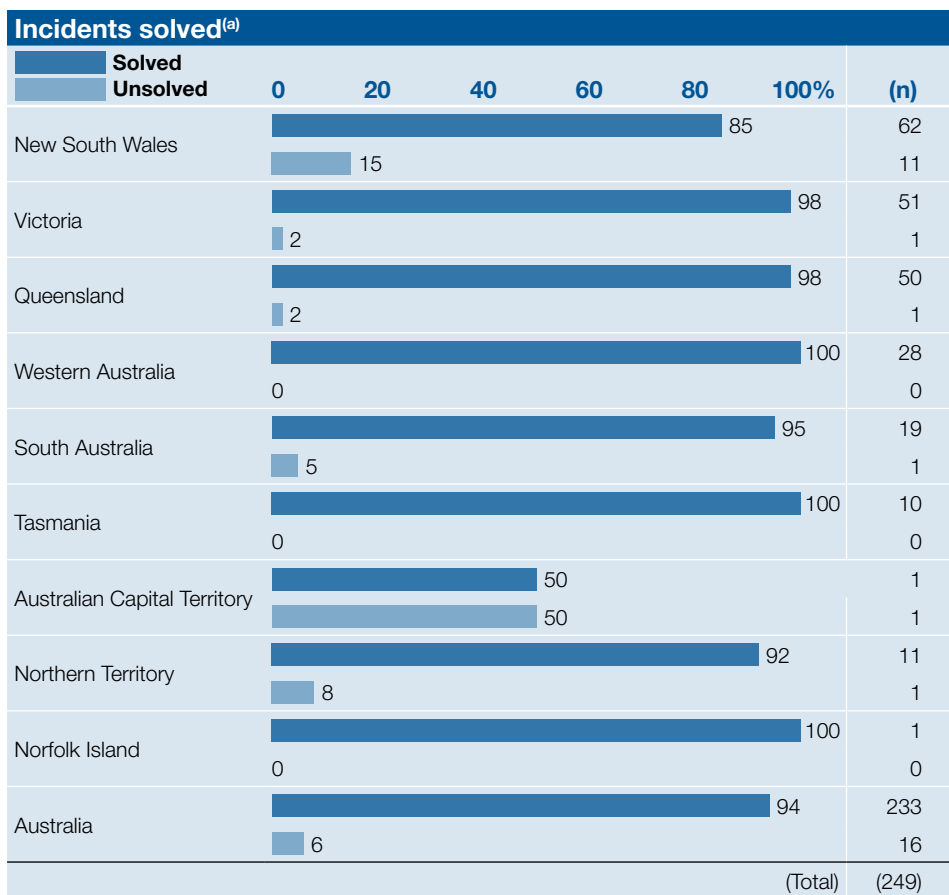
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
New South Wales							73
Victoria							52
Queensland							51
Western Australia							28
South Australia							20
Tasmania							10
Australian Capital Territory							2
Northern Territory							12
Norfolk Island							1
Australia							249

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]



(a) excludes one incident where the exact charge has yet to be determined (investigation continuing)

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]



(a) solved incidents include those where an offender has been identified and charged, and incidents where the offender has suicided

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Incidents with single versus multiple victims/offenders							
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
One victim, one offender	81						189
One victim, multiple offenders	14						32
Multiple victims, one offender	4						10
Multiple victims, multiple offenders	1						2
(Total) ^(a)	100						(233)

(a) where an offender has been identified: excludes 16 cases where an offender has not been identified or formally charged

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Incidents by number of victims (percent)					
	(n)	1 victim	2 victims	3 victims	4+ victims
New South Wales	(73)	92	5	3	0
Victoria	(52)	98	0	0	2
Queensland	(51)	94	4	2	0
Western Australia	(28)	93	7	0	0
South Australia	(20)	100	0	0	0
Tasmania	(10)	90	10	0	0
Australian Capital Territory	(2)	100	0	0	0
Northern Territory	(12)	100	0	0	0
Norfolk Island	(1)	100	0	0	0
Australia	(249)	95	4	1	<1

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Incidents by number of offenders (percent)^(a)					
	(n)	1 offender	2 offenders	3 offenders	4+ offenders
New South Wales	(62)	84	11	3	2
Victoria	(51)	84	10	6	0
Queensland	(50)	84	8	4	4
Western Australia	(28)	100	0	0	0
South Australia	(19)	79	10	5	5
Tasmania	(10)	70	20	0	10
Australian Capital Territory	(1)	100	0	0	0
Northern Territory	(11)	91	0	9	0
Norfolk Island	(1)	100	0	0	0
Australia	(233)	85	9	4	2

(a) refers to incidents where an offender has been identified

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]














Incidents by time of day (percent)					
	(n)	Midnight – 6am	6am – Noon	Noon – 6pm	6pm – Midnight
New South Wales	(73)	29	15	11	45
Victoria	(49)	24	20	14	41
Queensland	(50)	36	10	18	36
Western Australia	(28)	25	25	4	46
South Australia	(19)	26	26	16	32
Tasmania	(10)	50	10	20	20
Australian Capital Territory	(2)	0	50	0	50
Northern Territory	(12)	42	0	17	42
Norfolk Island	(1)	0	100	0	0
Australia ^(a)	(244)	30	17	13	40

(a) excludes five incidents where the exact time of day the incident occurred was unknown or not stated

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Incidents by day of the week (percent)								
	(n)	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
New South Wales	(73)	23	14	15	10	7	14	18
Victoria	(52)	23	6	6	19	19	10	17
Queensland	(51)	16	12	10	4	20	20	20
Western Australia	(28)	7	21	18	11	18	7	18
South Australia	(20)	25	0	5	20	5	20	25
Tasmania	(10)	20	20	0	10	20	20	10
Australian Capital Territory	(2)	50	0	0	0	50	0	0
Northern Territory	(12)	0	0	33	33	8	17	8
Norfolk Island	(1)	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	(249)	19	11	12	12	14	14	18

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]









Incidents by month							
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
January		10					26
February		13					33
March		7					17
April		9					23
May		7					18
June		7					17
July		9					22
August		9					22
September		5					13
October		8					21
November		7					18
December		8					19
(Total)		100					(249)

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Incidents by location (percent)				
	(n)	Residential	Street/ open area	Other location^(a)
New South Wales	(73)	66	22	12
Victoria	(52)	73	13	13
Queensland	(51)	57	27	16
Western Australia	(28)	54	32	14
South Australia	(20)	60	15	25
Tasmania	(10)	90	10	0
Australian Capital Territory	(2)	100	0	0
Northern Territory	(12)	42	42	17
Norfolk Island	(1)	0	0	100
Australia	(249)	63	22	14











(a) includes shops, shopping malls, banks/credit unions/post offices, car parks/public garages/service stations, workplaces, other commercial premises, public transport and related facilities, places of entertainment, and corrective/health institutions

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Incidents occurring during the course of another crime							
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
New South Wales							17
Victoria							16
Queensland							8
Western Australia							6
South Australia							4
Tasmania							4
Australian Capital Territory	0						0
Northern Territory							2
Norfolk Island	0						0
Australia ^(a)							57

(a) there were a further 10 incidents where it was not known if they occurred in the course of another crime

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

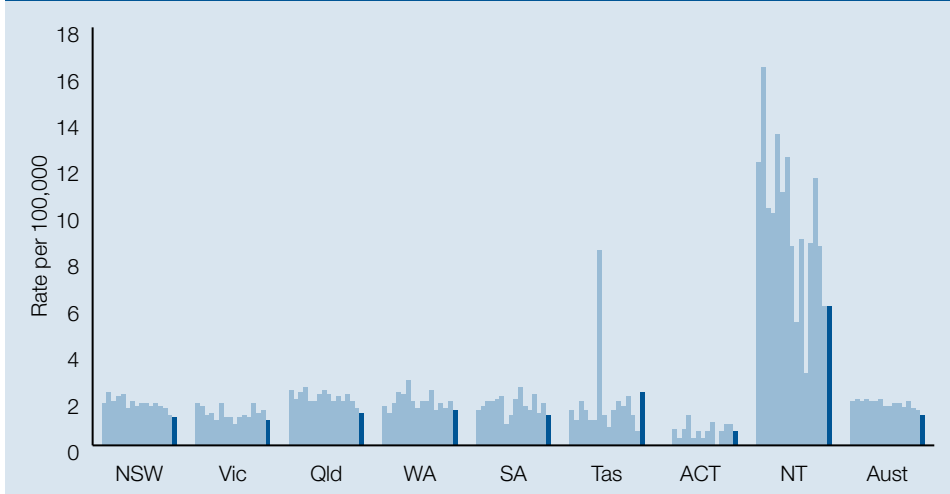
Incidents occurring during the course of another crime by type of crime								
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)	
Kidnapping/abduction							4	2
Robbery							14	8
Arson ^(a)							21	12
Break & enter							12	7
Theft ^(a)							5	3
Other property							4	2
Prostitution							7	4
Drug offences							23	13
Other							11	6
(Total)							100	(57)

(a) includes more than one victim

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Victim characteristics

Trends in homicide victimisation (rate)^(a)



(a) includes one murder victim in Norfolk Island for the year 2001–02 and one for the year 2004–05

Source: AIC, NHMP 1989–90 to 2004–05 [computer file]

Gender of victims										
	Males	Females	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)	Rate ^(a)
New South Wales	68	32							55	1.6
Victoria	71	29							39	1.6
Queensland	71	29							39	2.0
Western Australia	59	41							17	1.7
South Australia	60	40							12	1.6
Tasmania	73	27							8	3.3
Australian Capital Territory	50	50							1	0.6
Northern Territory	58	42							7	6.6
Norfolk Island	100	0							1	50.0
Australia ^(b)	67	33							179	1.8
									87	0.9

(a) rate per 100,000 population

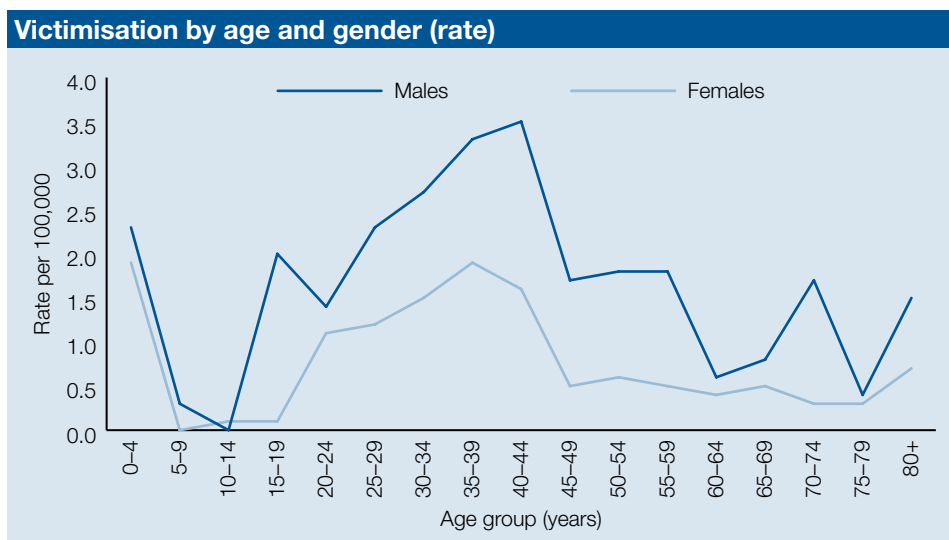
(b) excludes one victim in Western Australia whose sex was unknown (unborn baby)

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

	Males		Females		Persons	
	(n)	Mean age	(n)	Mean age	(n)	Mean age
	New South Wales	55	36	26	29	81
Victoria	39	42	16	35	55	40
Queensland	39	34	16	42	55	37
Western Australia	17	28	12	32	30	29
South Australia	12	33	8	44	20	37
Tasmania	8	43	3	43	11	43
Australian Capital Territory	1	45	1	24	2	35
Northern Territory	7	37	5	35	12	36
Norfolk Island	1	50	0	0	1	50
Australia ^(a)	179	37	87	35	267	36

(a) excludes one victim in Western Australia whose sex was unknown (unborn baby)

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]



Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Victimisation by age and gender						
	Males		Females		Persons^(a)	
	(n)	Rate^(b)	(n)	Rate^(b)	(n)	Rate^(b)
0-4	15	2.3	12	1.9	28	2.2
5-9	2	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.2
10-14	0	0.0	1	0.1	1	0.1
15-19	14	2.0	1	0.1	15	1.1
20-24	10	1.4	8	1.1	18	1.3
25-29	16	2.3	8	1.2	24	1.8
30-34	20	2.7	11	1.5	31	2.1
35-39	24	3.3	14	1.9	38	2.6
40-44	27	3.5	12	1.6	39	2.5
45-49	12	1.7	4	0.5	16	1.1
50-54	12	1.8	4	0.6	16	1.2
55-59	11	1.8	3	0.5	14	1.1
60-64	3	0.6	2	0.4	5	0.5
65-69	3	0.8	2	0.5	5	0.6
70-74	5	1.7	1	0.3	6	1.0
75-79	1	0.4	1	0.3	2	0.4
80+	4	1.5	3	0.7	7	1.0

(a) includes one unborn baby whose gender was not known

(b) rate per 100,000

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004-05 [computer file]

Racial appearance of victims						Total n	Caucasian	Indigenous	Asian	Other ^(a)		
Males	Females	0	20	40	60						80	100%
NSW	69	31	55	84	7	7	2	25	92	0	8	0
Vic	70	30	38	84	5	11	0	16	94	0	6	0
Qld	71	29	39	87	13	0	0	16	75	19	6	0
WA	61	38	16	44	50	6	0	10	60	30	10	0
SA	60	40	12	92	0	8	0	8	63	38	0	0
Tas	73	27	8	100	0	0	0	3	100	0	0	0
ACT	50	50	1	100	0	0	0	1	0	0	100	0
NT	58	42	7	43	57	0	0	5	0	100	0	0
Norfolk Island	100	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australia ^(b)	67	33	177	81	13	6	1	84	76	17	7	0

(a) other includes Maori/Pacific Islander and other

(b) excludes five victims whose racial appearance was not stated and one victim whose gender was unknown (unborn baby)

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Marital status of victims (percent)								
	Never married		Married/ de facto		Separated/ divorced		Widowed	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
New South Wales	55	32	34	37	11	26	0	5
Victoria	23	15	45	54	29	23	3	8
Queensland	75	25	25	58	0	17	0	0
Western Australia	67	0	33	71	0	29	0	0
South Australia	44	38	33	50	22	13	0	0
Tasmania	71	0	14	33	14	67	0	0
Australian Capital Territory	100	0	0	100	0	0	0	0
Northern Territory	0	0	83	100	17	0	0	0
Norfolk Island	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
Australia ^(a)	45	21	38	54	16	22	1	3

(a) excludes 31 victims aged less than 15 years and 53 victims for whom marital status information was unavailable

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]




Victims employed ^(a) at the time of the incident								
	Males	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
	Females							
New South Wales	Males	43						20
	Females	44						8
Victoria	Males	32						11
	Females	27						3
Queensland	Males	56						5
	Females	50						4
Western Australia	Males	31						4
	Females	22						2
South Australia	Males	60						6
	Females	38						3
Tasmania	Males	0						0
	Females	67						2
Australian Capital Territory	Males	100						1
	Females	0						0
Northern Territory	Males	20						1
	Females	0						0
Norfolk Island	Males	100						1
	Females	0						0
Australia	Males	39						49
	Females	35						22
							(Total males) ^(b)	(126)
							(Total females) ^(c)	(62)

(a) defined as full or part time employment

(b) excludes 18 victims aged less than 15 years, and 35 victims where employment status information was not available

(c) excludes 13 victims aged less than 15 years, and 12 victims where employment status information was not available

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Victims with a criminal history								
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)	
Males							48	84
Females							25	21
Persons ^(a)							40	105



(a) excludes six victims (three males; two females; one unknown gender) where information was not available

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

	Victims by alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drug use (percent)							
	Alcohol only		Illicit/ prescription drugs only		Alcohol & illicit/ prescription drugs		No alcohol or drug use	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
New South Wales	20	4	22	26	14	4	43	65
Victoria	3	19	16	31	19	0	62	50
Queensland	44	20	5	0	0	7	51	73
Western Australia	25	27	0	18	0	0	75	55
South Australia	0	0	0	14	44	57	56	29
Tasmania	13	0	25	0	63	33	0	67
Australian Capital Territory	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Northern Territory	14	80	0	0	57	0	29	20
Norfolk Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
Australia	21	17	13	17	16	9	50	57
(Total n) ^(a)	(35)	(14)	(21)	(14)	(27)	(7)	(84)	(46)

(a) excludes 18 victims (12 males and six females) where alcohol and/or illicit prescription drug use information was not available, and one victim whose gender was unknown (unborn baby)

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file], National Coroners Information System (NCIS)

Victims killed by a mentally disordered offender ^(a)							
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
Yes							51
No							162

(a) this refers to cases where it was believed that the offender suffered from a mental disorder immediately before or at the time of the incident, where noted in police documents (which may not be comprehensive)

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Victims by cause of death (number)						
	Gunshot wound	Stab wound	Beating	Strangulation/suffocation	Other ^(a)	Unknown
New South Wales	20	19	21	9	11	1
Victoria	9	21	10	9	6	0
Queensland	3	16	23	6	2	5
Western Australia	1	14	5	3	6	1
South Australia	2	6	6	4	2	0
Tasmania	3	1	5	0	2	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	1	1	0	0
Northern Territory	1	6	5	0	0	0
Norfolk Island	1	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	40	83	76	32	29	7
(%)	(15)	(31)	(28)	(12)	(11)	(3)

(a) other includes: drug overdose, drowning/submersion, neglect, smoke inhalation/burns, shaking, and pushed from a high place

Source: AIC, NHMP 2003–04 [computer file]

Victims by cause of death (percent)										
	Gunshot wound		Stab wound		Beating		Strangulation/suffocation		Other ^(a)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
New South Wales	29	16	24	24	31	16	4	29	13	16
Victoria	23	0	38	38	18	19	15	19	5	25
Queensland	8	0	29	42	47	42	13	8	3	8
Western Australia	6	0	41	64	18	9	6	18	29	9
South Australia	8	13	17	50	42	13	17	25	17	0
Tasmania	13	67	13	0	50	33	0	0	25	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0
Northern Territory	14	0	57	40	29	60	0	0	0	0
Norfolk Island	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	18	9	30	37	32	22	9	20	11	12
(Total n) ^(b)	(33)	(7)	(53)	(30)	(57)	(18)	(16)	(16)	(19)	(10)

(a) other includes: drug overdose, drowning/submersion, neglect, smoke inhalation/burns, shaking, other

(b) excludes one male and six female victims where cause of death was unknown, and one victim whose gender was unknown

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Victims by type of weapon (number)						
	Firearm	Knife/sharp instrument	Blunt instrument	Hands/feet	Other ^(a)	Unknown/no weapon
New South Wales	20	19	9	18	11	4
Victoria	9	22	3	14	6	1
Queensland	3	16	11	15	7	3
Western Australia	1	14	3	3	8	1
South Australia	2	6	3	7	1	1
Tasmania	3	1	4	1	2	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	1	1	0	0
Northern Territory	1	6	4	1	0	0
Norfolk Island	1	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	40	84	38	60	35	10
(%)	(15)	(31)	(14)	(22)	(13)	(4)

(a) other includes: explosives, fire, poison, drugs, vehicles and other weapons

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

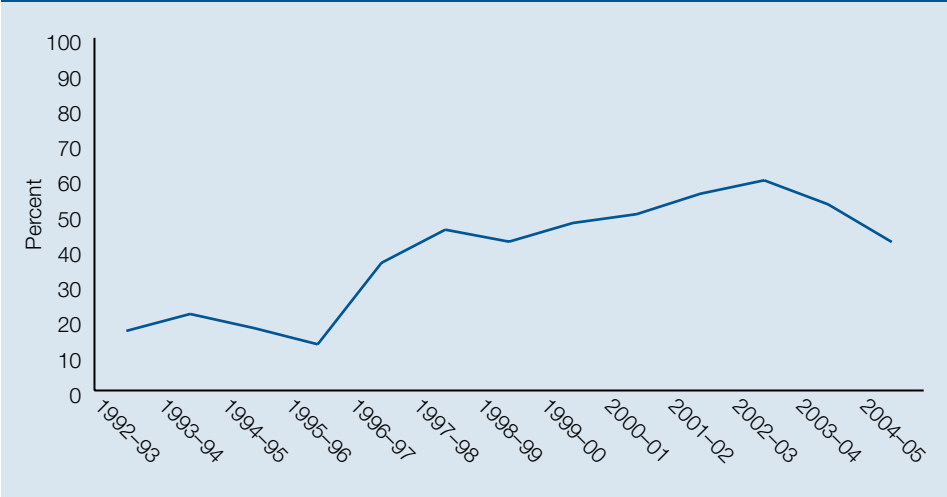
Victims by type of weapon (percent)										
	Firearm		Knife/sharp instrument		Blunt instrument		Hands/feet		Other ^(a)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
New South Wales	30	17	24	26	11	13	22	26	13	17
Victoria	24	0	42	38	8	0	21	38	5	25
Queensland	8	0	29	36	24	14	26	36	13	14
Western Australia	6	0	41	64	12	9	6	9	35	18
South Australia	9	13	18	50	18	13	45	25	9	0
Tasmania	13	67	13	0	38	33	13	0	25	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0
Northern Territory	14	0	57	40	29	40	0	20	0	0
Norfolk Island	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	19	9	31	37	16	12	21	27	13	15
(Total n) ^(b)	(33)	(7)	(54)	(30)	(28)	(10)	(37)	(22)	(23)	(12)

(a) other includes explosives, fire, poison, drugs, vehicles, and other weapons

(b) excludes 10 victims (four males; six females) where type of weapon used was unknown, and one victim whose gender was unknown

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

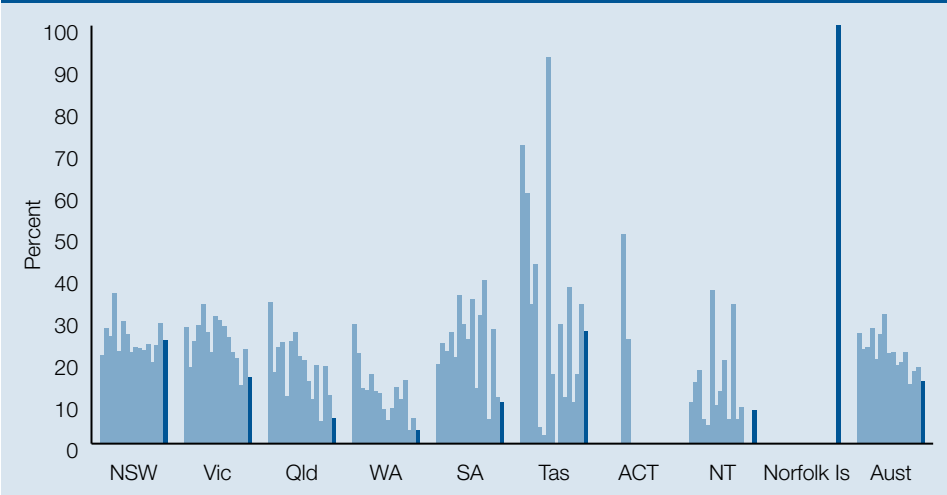
Handgun homicides as a percentage of firearms homicides^(a) (percent)



(a) figures exclude cases where the type of firearm has not yet been identified

Source: AIC, NHMP 1989-90 to 2004-05 [computer file]

Trends in firearm homicides (percent)^(a)



(a) figures exclude cases where weapon type was unknown

Source: AIC, NHMP 1989-90 to 2004-05 [computer file]

Victims killed with a handgun or other firearm									
	Handguns	Other firearms	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
New South Wales	12	11							10
Victoria	7	9							4
Queensland	2	4							1
Western Australia	0	0							0
South Australia	5	5							1
Tasmania	0	27							0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0							0
Northern Territory	0	9							0
Norfolk Island	0	100							1
Australia ^(a)	6	8							16
									22

(a) excludes two homicides (WA & NSW) where details of the type of firearm were not known

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Licence and registration status of firearms used in homicide (number)						
	Victims (n=39)^(a)		Offenders (n=29)^(b)			
	Licensed	Registered	Licensed	Registered	Unlicensed	Unregistered
New South Wales	1	1	3	2	12	13
Victoria	7	1	2	2	4	4
Queensland	0	0	0	0	2	2
Western Australia	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Australia	0	0	0	0	2	2
Tasmania	0	0	0	0	3	3
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Territory	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk Island	1	0	1	1	0	0
Australia	9	2	6	5	23	24
(Total %)	(23)	(5)	(21)	(17)	(79)	(83)

(a) excludes one victim whose licensing and registration details were not known

(b) excludes five cases where the offenders registration and licensing details were not known

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Victims by alleged motive (percent)														
	Revenge		Domestic^(a)		Money/ drugs		Alcohol related arg.		Other argument		Other motive^(b)		No apparent motive^(c)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
NSW	9	0	11	35	18	8	9	0	15	0	0	0	38	58
Vic	10	6	15	33	21	11	0	0	15	6	10	6	28	39
Qld	5	0	5	38	8	19	15	0	38	13	0	6	28	25
WA	6	0	12	25	6	17	18	25	18	0	0	0	41	33
SA	8	0	17	50	17	0	8	17	8	17	0	0	42	17
Tas	0	67	0	33	38	0	25	0	0	0	13	0	25	0
ACT	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
NT	29	0	43	100	14	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk Is	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
Australia ^(d)	9	4	13	44	17	12	11	5	21	5	3	3	33	36
(Total n)	(15)	(3)	(21)	(34)	(28)	(9)	(17)	(4)	(34)	(4)	(5)	(2)	(59)	(31)

(a) domestic includes jealousy, desertion/termination of a relationship and other domestic altercation

(b) other motive includes racial/sexual vilification (hate crimes), sexual gratification, envy and other motives

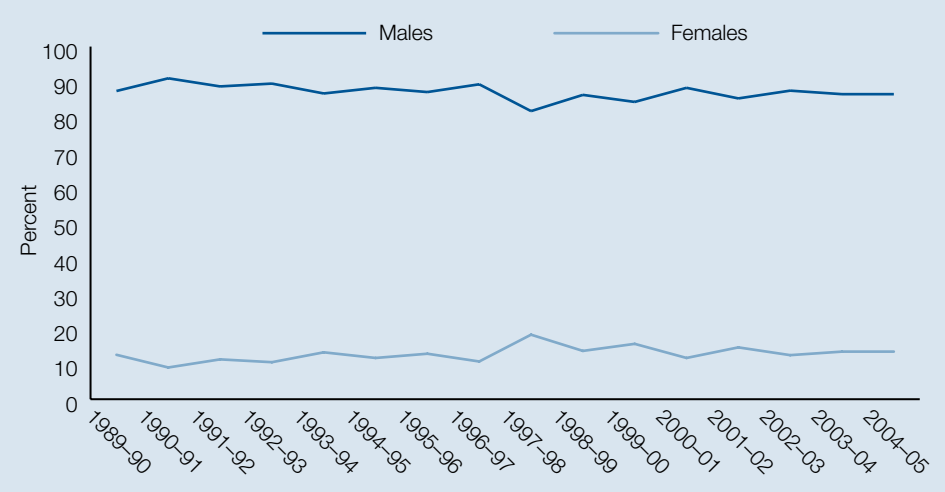
(c) also includes victims where the motive for the homicide has yet to be determined/is unknown

(d) excludes one victim whose gender was not known

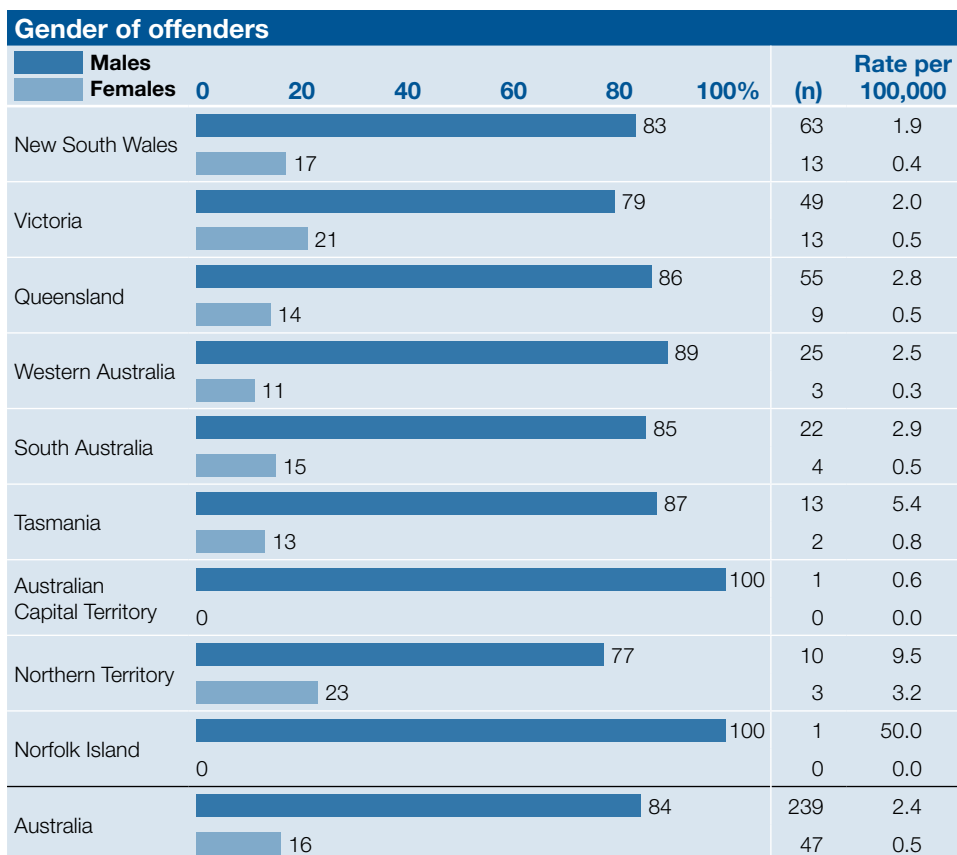
Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Offender characteristics

Trends in homicide offending (percent)



Source: AIC, NHMP 1989-90 to 2004-05 [computer file]

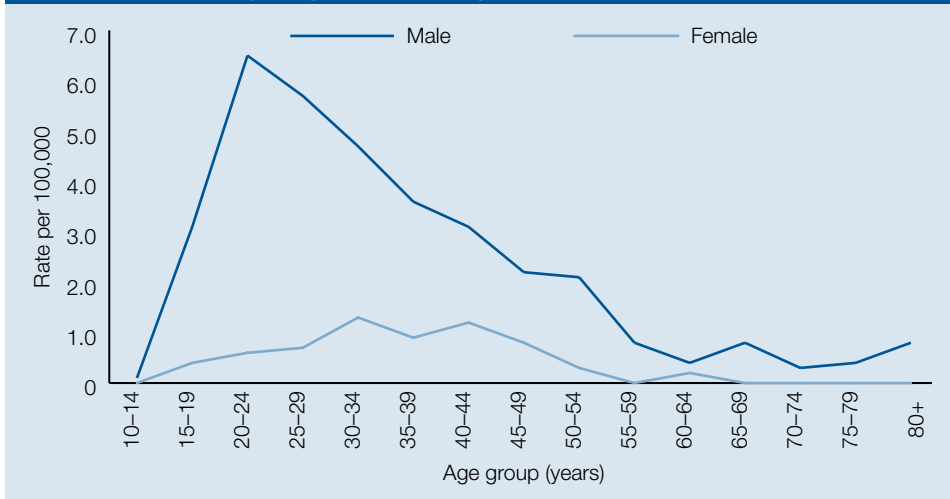


Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Age of offenders

	Males		Females		Persons	
	(n)	Mean age	(n)	Mean age	(n)	Mean age
New South Wales	(63)	35	(13)	35	(76)	35
Victoria	(49)	33	(13)	38	(62)	34
Queensland	(55)	31	(9)	35	(64)	31
Western Australia	(25)	35	(3)	44	(28)	36
South Australia	(22)	33	(4)	29	(26)	32
Tasmania	(13)	40	(2)	40	(15)	40
Australian Capital Territory	(1)	24	(0)	0	(1)	24
Northern Territory	(10)	32	(3)	30	(13)	34
Norfolk Island	(1)	25	(0)	0	(1)	25
Australia	(239)	33	(47)	36	(286)	34

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Homicide offending by gender and age

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Homicide offending, by age and gender

	Males		Females		Persons	
	Number	Rate ^(a)	Number	Rate ^(a)	Number	Rate ^(a)
10-14	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1
15-19	22	3.1	3	0.4	25	1.8
20-24	48	6.5	4	0.6	52	3.6
25-29	39	5.7	5	0.7	44	3.2
30-34	35	4.7	10	1.3	45	3.0
35-39	26	3.6	7	0.9	33	2.2
40-44	24	3.1	9	1.2	33	2.1
45-49	16	2.2	6	0.8	22	1.5
50-54	14	2.1	2	0.3	16	1.2
55-59	5	0.8	0	0.0	5	0.4
60-64	2	0.4	1	0.2	3	0.3
65-69	3	0.8	0	0.0	3	0.4
70-74	1	0.3	0	0.0	1	0.2
75-79	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.2
80+	2	0.8	0	0.0	2	0.3

(a) rate per 100,000 population

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Racial appearance of offenders						Males	Females	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)	Caucasian	Indigenous	Asian	Other ^(a)
NSW	83	17	(63)	73	5	10	13	(13)	85	15	0	0						
Vic	79	21	(48)	75	6	10	8	(13)	92	0	8	0						
Qld	86	14	(54)	74	19	2	6	(9)	78	22	0	0						
WA	89	11	(25)	60	32	0	8	(3)	0	100	0	0						
SA	85	15	(22)	68	32	0	0	(4)	75	25	0	0						
Tas	87	13	(13)	85	15	0	0	(2)	100	0	0	0						
ACT	100	0	(1)	0	0	100	0	(0)	0	0	0	0						
NT	77	23	(10)	30	70	0	0	(3)	33	67	0	0						
Norfolk Island	100	0	(1)	100	0	0	0	(0)	0	0	0	0						
Australia ^(b)	84	16	(237)	70	17	5	7	(47)	77	21	2	0						

(a) other includes Maori/Pacific Islander and other

(b) excludes 2 offenders whose racial appearance was unknown/not stated

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Offenders by marital status (percent)^(a)								
	Never married		Married/ de facto		Separated/ divorced		Widowed	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
New South Wales	54	31	28	62	19	8	0	0
Victoria	52	31	29	46	17	15	2	8
Queensland	57	60	35	20	8	20	0	0
Western Australia	45	0	40	100	15	0	0	0
South Australia	58	33	32	33	11	33	0	0
Tasmania	44	50	33	50	22	0	0	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Territory	20	33	60	67	20	0	0	0
Norfolk Island	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	51	33	33	52	15	12	1	2

(a) excludes 45 male offenders and five female offenders for whom marital status information was unavailable and one offender aged less than 15 years

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Offenders employed at the time of the incident								
	Males	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
	Females							
New South Wales				40				23
		23						3
Victoria			26					8
		27						3
Queensland			36					10
				57				4
Western Australia			21					5
		0						0
South Australia			32					6
		0						0
Tasmania			23					3
		0						0
Australian Capital Territory		0						0
		0						0
Northern Territory				57				4
			33					1
Norfolk Island							100	1
		0						0
Australia			33					60
			26					11
							(Total males n) ^(a)	(180)
							(Total females n) ^(b)	(42)

(a) excludes 57 offenders where employment status information was not available, one offender who was under 15 years of age and one offender who was a foreign visitor




(b) excludes five offenders where employment status information was not available

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Offenders by alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drug use (percent)								
	Alcohol only		Illicit/prescription drugs only		Alcohol & illicit/prescription drugs		No alcohol or drug Use	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
New South Wales	37	33	19	17	6	17	38	33
Victoria	25	50	25	0	0	17	50	33
Queensland	30	44	8	0	6	0	56	56
Western Australia	33	100	8	0	0	0	58	0
South Australia	0	0	18	0	9	0	73	100
Tasmania	22	0	11	0	33	100	33	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Territory	60	100	0	0	0	0	40	0
Norfolk Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	30	45	14	6	6	12	50	36
(n) ^(a)	(51)	(15)	(23)	(2)	(10)	(4)	(84)	12




(a) excludes 71 male offenders and 14 female offenders where alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drug use was not known

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]





Offenders with a criminal history								
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)	
Males							70	165
Females							70	33
Persons ^(a)							70	198

(a) excludes four male offenders where criminal history was unavailable

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Offenders who committed suicide prior to or following arrest								
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)	
Males							6	15
Females							4	2
Persons							6	17

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Domestic violence history ^(a)							
	0	20	40	60	80	100%	(n)
History							38
Legal intervention							7
No history							236
Not stated							5

(a) incidents where either the victim or offender had a history of domestic violence

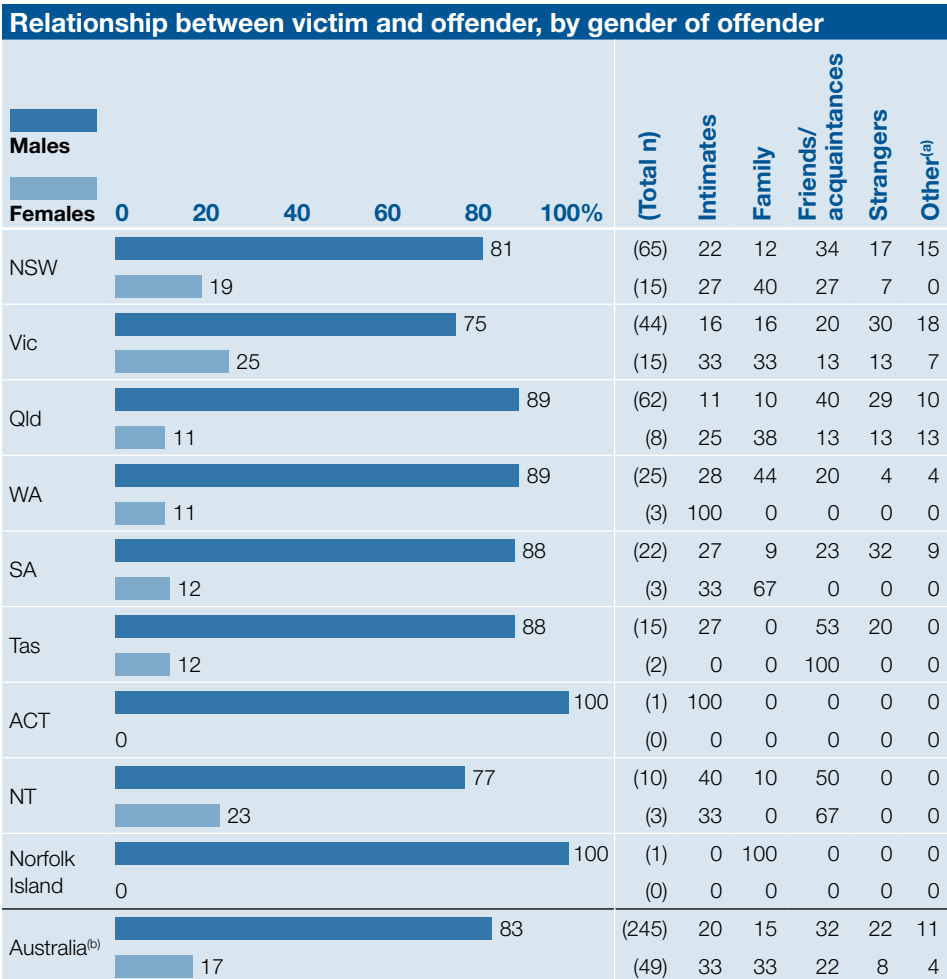
Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Relationship between victim and offender (percent)						
	(n)	Intimates	Family	Friends/ acquaintances	Strangers	Other ^(a)
New South Wales	(80)	23	18	33	15	13
Victoria	(59)	20	20	19	25	15
Queensland	(70)	13	13	37	27	10
Western Australia	(28)	36	39	18	4	4
South Australia	(25)	28	16	20	28	8
Tasmania	(17)	24	0	59	18	0
Australian Capital Territory	(1)	100	0	0	0	0
Northern Territory	(13)	38	8	54	0	0
Norfolk Island	(1)	0	100	0	0	0
Australia ^(b)	(294)	22	18	31	19	10

(a) other includes business associates, tour guide/tourists, employee/employer, boarding house manager/boarder and colleagues

(b) excludes 14 cases where the relationship between the offender and the victim is unknown

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]



(a) other includes business associates, tour guide/tourists, employee/employer, boarding house manager/boarder and colleagues

(b) excludes 14 cases where the relationship between the offenders and the victim is unknown

Source: AIC, NHMP 2004–05 [computer file]

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Note: All URLs were correct in July 2006.

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This report presents tabulated information on the circumstances and characteristics of homicide in Australia for the fiscal year 2004–05. In addition, the report contains jurisdictional breakdowns for comparative purposes and some long term trend data across the 16 year NHMP data collection period. In 2004–05, there was a total of 249 incidents of homicide recorded. These were committed by 286 homicide offenders and resulted in the deaths of 267 victims. This is a decrease compared with the previous year.