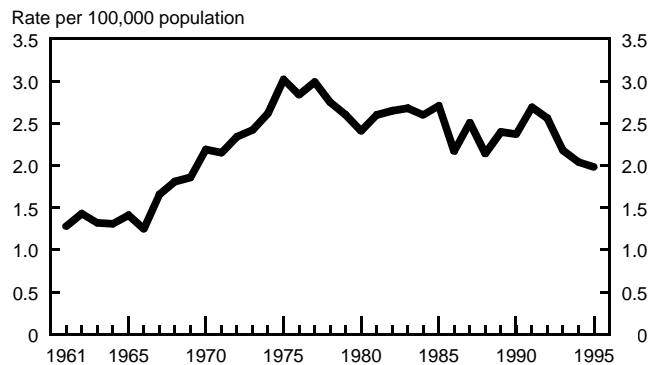# HOMICIDE IN CANADA — 1995

Orest Fedorowycz

Highlights

- The homicide rate declined again in 1995, after reaching a 25-year low in 1994. This was the fourth consecutive annual decrease. There were 586 homicides reported in 1995, 10 fewer than the previous year. The national homicide rate has gradually been declining over the last 20 years.

- Most provinces reported a decline in their homicide rate in 1995; minor increases occurred in British Columbia, Quebec and Newfoundland. British Columbia recorded the highest provincial rate for the fourth straight year, followed by Manitoba and Alberta. Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland recorded the lowest rates. Both Manitoba and Saskatchewan reported their lowest homicide rates in nearly 30 years.

Figure 1

Homicide Rates, 1961-1995

Rate per 100,000 population

- Since 1979, firearms have accounted for one in every three homicides. In 1995, 30% of homicides were committed with firearms, slightly lower than average. Handguns have comprised one in every six homicides since 1991. In the 15 years previous to 1991, handguns accounted for only one in every 10 homicides.

- Most homicides are committed by someone known to the victim. One in every six solved homicides (16%) were perpetrated by strangers in 1995, consistent with previous years. Spousal homicides increased slightly in 1995, accounting for a further 19% of the total.

- In 1995, 65 youths (aged 12-17) were accused of committing homicide. This total is eight more than in 1994 and is the highest number of youths accused in 20 years. From 1985 to 1994, the youth homicide rate remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 1.5 and 2.5 per 100,000 youths. While the 1995 rate of 2.7 was higher than average, it is difficult to say, given the small numbers, if this is the start of a new trend or simply normal year-to-year fluctuations in the numbers.

Note of appreciation

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Introduction

Police-reported violent crime in Canada increased steadily from the early 1970s through to the early 1990s. Homicides, in particular, tend to be widely covered in the media, especially those of a brutal nature or those targeting the more vulnerable members of society. The 1993 General Social Survey indicated a growing concern among Canadians about threats of attack or violence. Yet the homicide rate has gradually been declining since the mid 1970s.

This *Juristat* examines homicide data collected from police agencies through the Homicide Survey and comments on short and long-term trends, and the circumstances surrounding homicide incidents. In addition, this report presents rates by province, territory and Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), and provides international comparisons.

> *In Canada, criminal homicide is classified as first degree murder, second degree murder, manslaughter or infanticide. Deaths caused by criminal negligence, suicide, accident or justifiable homicide are not included in this classification.*

GENERAL TRENDS

Homicide is a relatively rare occurrence in Canada: homicides accounted for 0.02% of the almost three million *Criminal Code* incidents reported to police in 1995, and 0.2% of all violent incidents.

Homicide rate declining over the last 20 years

Despite public perceptions of increasing crime, the homicide rate has been generally declining since the mid 1970s. There were 586 homicide offences reported in 1995, a decrease of 10 homicides from 1994. The 1995 homicide rate of 1.98 per 100,000 population represented the fourth consecutive annual decline, a decrease of 26% over these four years.

Since 1961, when national homicide statistics were first collected, there have been two distinct trends. Between 1961 and 1975 the homicide rate increased steadily from 1.28 per 100,000 population to a peak of 3.02, an increase of 136%. Since then, despite yearly fluctuations, the homicide rate has gradually declined to the current rate of 1.98, a decrease of 34% (Figure 1).

International comparisons

According to preliminary figures, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported 21,445 homicides in the United States in 1995, a rate of 8.5 per 100,000 population. Although Canada's rate (1.98) was one-quarter that of the United States, it was still higher than many European countries. For example, England and Wales reported a homicide rate of 1.4 per 100,000 population in 1995, about 30% lower than Canada's rate (Table 1).[1]

[1] *Information provided by National Central Bureau - Interpol Ottawa.*

Table 1

	1994 homicide rate[1]			1994 homicide rate[1]
Ireland		0.15	Canada (1995)	1.98
Australia		0.88	Scotland	2.10
Switzerland		1.14	France	2.44
England and Wales	(1995)	1.40	Hungary	3.02
Germany		1.69	Northern Ireland	6.51
Italy		1.71	Netherlands	7.98
Sweden		1.81	United States (1995)	8.50

[1] *Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.*

Violent crime rate decreasing since 1992

Contrary to the trend in homicide rates, the violent crime rate more than doubled from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, primarily because of large increases in Level 1 assaults, where physical injury inflicted on the victim was relatively minor. In the early 1980s, changes in legislation (rape and indecent assault), police policy or recording practices (eg. in spousal assault cases) and reduced societal tolerance of certain types of violence (eg. school violence) contributed at least partly to the increased rates of assault.[2] The violent crime rate has been decreasing, however, since 1992.

Speculation that the declining homicide rate over the past few years may in part be due to victims of serious assaults being saved by more advanced medical procedures and the increased use of paramedics, implies that the number of attempted murders in Canada would have increased in recent years. In fact, the trend in the rate of attempted murders is almost parallel to that of homicide. While the homicide rate declined by 26% since 1991, the attempted murder rate has also declined (15%) during this same period. Therefore, the decline in the homicide rate must be attributed to other factors.

GEOGRAPHICAL PATTERNS

Homicide rate declining in most provinces

Most provinces have generally followed the national trend of declining homicide rates since the mid-1970's. The exceptions have been in the Atlantic provinces where homicide rates have remained relatively constant over the last 20 years.

Only three provinces reported an increase in homicides in 1995: Quebec (+9), British Columbia (+7) and Newfoundland (+1) (Table 2). The increase in Quebec followed a 26-year low in the homicide rate reached in 1994; the 1995 rate was still well below

Figure 2

Homicide Rates by Province, 1995
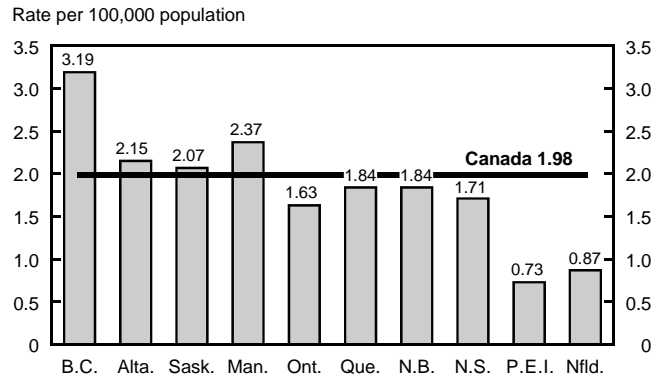
Rate per 100,000 population

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

the average in that province over the past 10 years. The homicide rates in both British Columbia and Newfoundland were very close to the previous 10-year average for those provinces.

As is the case historically, rates were generally higher in the west than in the east. Among the provinces, British Columbia recorded the highest rate (3.19) for the fourth consecutive year, followed by Manitoba (2.37) and Alberta (2.15). Prince Edward Island, with one homicide, recorded the lowest rate (0.73), followed by Newfoundland (0.87). The homicide rates in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan were the lowest in nearly 30 years in those provinces (Figure 2).

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[2] Kingsley, B. Crime Counts - A Criminal Event Analysis, edited by L. Kennedy and V. Sacco, Toronto, Nelson Canada, 1996: 101.

Table 2

Homicides by Province/Territory, 1994 and 1995

Province/Territory	1995[1]		1994		Average 1985-1994	
	Number	Rate[2]	Number	Rate[2r]	Number	Rate[2]
Newfoundland	5	0.87	4	0.69	5	0.86
Prince Edward Island	1	0.73	1	0.74	1	0.69
Nova Scotia	16	1.71	19	2.03	17	1.88
New Brunswick	14	1.84	15	1.98	14	1.86
Québec	135	1.84	126	1.73	173	2.48
Ontario	181	1.63	192	1.76	195	1.92
Manitoba	27	2.37	29	2.57	36	3.27
Saskatchewan	21	2.07	24	2.37	27	2.67
Alberta	59	2.15	66	2.43	70	2.74
British Columbia	120	3.19	113	3.08	104	3.17
Yukon	4	13.29	3	10.10	2	7.60
Northwest Territories	3	4.56	4	6.18	8	14.60
CANADA	**586**	**1.98**	**596**	**2.04**	**652**	**2.37**

[1] The following numbers of homicides were reported and included in 1995 but occurred in previous years: N.S. - 1; Ont. - 3; Man. - 1; Alta. - 1; B.C. - 3; TOTAL - 9.
[2] Rates are calculated per 100,000 population using updated postcensal estimates.
[r] Revised.

Source : Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Homicide rate in major metropolitan areas only slightly higher than national average

Crime, particularly homicide, is often considered to be an urban phenomenon. In 1995, 368 (63%) of the 586 reported homicides occurred within Canada's 25 Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs). During the same year, CMAs comprised 61% of the Canadian population, meaning that major metropolitan areas were only slightly over-represented in terms of homicide occurrences.

> *Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) - a large urban core (population of 100,000 and over) together with adjacent urban and rural areas which have a high degree of economic and social integration.*

Table 3 divides the CMAs into three population categories and shows that the nine largest CMAs (populations of 500,000 and over) had, in 1995, a homicide rate (2.22) that was 12% higher than the national rate of 1.98 homicides per 100,000 population. The remaining CMA groups (100,000 - 249,999 population and 250,000 - 499,999 population) reported rates (1.69 and 1.12, respectively) well under the national average.

Table 3

Homicides by Census Metropolitan Area, 1994 and 1995

Census Metropolitan Areas	1995[1]			1994			Average 1985-1994		
	Population (000s)	Number	Rate[2]	Population (000s)[r]	Number	Rate[2]	Population (000s)	Number	Rate[2]
500,000+ population									
Toronto	4,338.4	74	1.71	4,254.5	85	2.00	3,890.5	76	1.94
Montréal	3,328.3	77	2.31	3,307.5	75	2.27	3,148.4	97	3.08
Vancouver	1,826.8	64	3.50	1,778.5	48	2.70	1,585.6	52	3.30
Ottawa-Hull	1,026.9	28	2.73	1,010.2	17	1.68	915.0	16	1.72
Ontario	774.8	24	3.10	761.5	12	1.58	693.4	12	1.70
Quebec	252.1	4	1.59	248.7	5	2.01	221.5	4	1.76
Edmonton	882.9	19	2.15	881.6	24	2.72	825.3	27	3.30
Calgary	828.5	17	2.05	812.5	18	2.22	737.2	17	2.32
Québec	695.2	4	0.58	689.3	11	1.60	647.4	19	2.93
Winnipeg	676.5	16	2.37	673.5	18	2.67	654.3	12	1.76
Hamilton	641.5	17	2.65	635.7	13	2.04	606.0	11	1.88
Total	**14,245.0**	**316**	**2.22**	**14,043.3**	**309**	**2.20**	**13,009.7**	**327**	**2.51**
250,000 - 499,999 population									
London	412.6	3	0.73	408.2	6	1.47	376.2	5	1.33
Kitchener	395.5	3	0.76	388.4	3	0.77	353.4	8	2.41
St. Catharines-Niagara	385.4	1	0.26	384.4	6	1.56	364.7	6	1.56
Halifax	342.8	6	1.75	338.8	8	2.36	318.9	7	2.29
Victoria	311.2	6	1.93	308.2	6	1.95	284.7	5	1.72
Windsor	286.2	8	2.80	281.4	4	1.42	268.6	7	2.61
Oshawa	276.2	-	0.00	269.6	2	0.74	234.6	4	1.71
Total	**2,409.9**	**27**	**1.12**	**2,379.0**	**35**	**1.47**	**2,201.1**	**42**	**1.93**
100,000 - 249,999 population									
Saskatoon	219.9	3	1.36	218.1	10	4.59	209.2	5	2.39
Regina	198.7	3	1.51	197.9	3	1.52	193.1	6	3.11
St. John's	177.3	4	2.26	178.4	2	1.12	171.3	2	1.17
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	167.7	1	0.60	167.2	1	0.60	161.3	2	1.24
Sudbury	166.3	4	2.41	166.7	3	1.80	158.7	4	2.52
Sherbrooke	148.0	-	0.00	146.8	2	1.36	140.8	1	0.71
Trois-Rivières	143.0	2	1.40	142.5	2	1.40	135.5	3	2.21
Saint John	129.1	3	2.32	129.4	6	4.64	126.1	3	3.17
Thunder Bay	130.9	5	3.82	130.7	4	3.06	127.7	4	3.13
Total	**1,480.9**	**25**	**1.69**	**1,477.7**	**33**	**2.23**	**1,423.7**	**30**	**2.18**
< 100,000 population	**11,470.3**	**218**	**1.90**	**11,351.6**	**219**	**1.93**	**10,927.9**	**253**	**2.30**
CANADA	**29,606.1**	**586**	**1.98**	**29,251.3**	**596**	**2.04**	**27,562.1**	**652**	**2.37**

[1] The following numbers of homicides were reported and included in 1995 but occurred in previous years: Winnipeg - 1; Vancouver - 1; Areas < 100,000 population - 7; TOTAL - 9.

[2] Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.

- Nil or zero.

[r] Revised.

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program ,Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Among the nine largest CMAs, Vancouver (with 64 homicides) reported the highest rate (3.50), followed by Ottawa (3.10) and Hamilton (2.65). Both Ottawa and Hamilton had unusually high rates: Ottawa's rate was the highest since 1981, when CMA data were first collected, and Hamilton's rate was the highest since 1983. Quebec City, with four homicides, reported the lowest rate (0.58) for the second consecutive year, followed by Toronto at 1.71. Also, Quebec City and Edmonton experienced their lowest homicide rates since 1981.

Among the seven CMAs with populations of 250,000 - 499,999, Windsor reported the highest homicide rate (2.80), while Oshawa reported no homicides and St. Catharines-Niagara, only one (0.26). For the nine CMAs with populations less than 250,000, Thunder Bay, with five homicides, reported the highest rate (3.82), while Sherbrooke recorded no homicides and Chicoutimi-Jonquière, only one (0.60).

It is important to note that, due to the relatively small number of homicides within some of the smaller CMAs, homicide rates for these areas can change dramatically from year to year.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMICIDE INCIDENTS

First degree murders show a slight increase

With the abolition of capital punishment in 1976, murder was categorized into first and second-degree (see Glossary of Terms for definitions of homicide). First degree murder as a proportion of all homicides rose from 36% in 1978 to 54% in 1995. There was a corresponding decline in the proportion of second degree murders reported by the police from 54% in 1978 to 37% in 1995. During the same time period, the proportion of manslaughters has remained relatively stable at about 9%, as has the percentage of infanticides, at approximately 1% annually (0.2% in 1995).

The classification of homicide offences in this report is based upon initial police investigation. In the transition period from initial police charging of the accused to final court disposition, the legal classification of an incident may change.

95% of homicide incidents involved a single victim

In 1995, 557 separate homicide incidents involving 586 victims were reported by the police. Similar to previous years, the majority of these incidents (95%) involved a single victim, while 5% were multiple-victim incidents. The 27 multiple-victim incidents reported in 1995 were distributed as follows: 25 incidents involved two victims, and two incidents involved three victims.

Eight in ten homicides solved by police

During 1995, 81% of the 557 reported homicide incidents were solved by the police through the identification of at least one accused, a slight increase from the previous year. Over the past ten years, clearance rates have fluctuated between 77% and 85%. Since the process of solving a homicide can be time-consuming, an incident may not be solved until after the year in

which it was initially recorded. These data, therefore, underestimate final police clearance rates.

Of those incidents cleared in 1995, 90% were cleared by a charge being laid, 9% by the accused having committed suicide immediately following the offence, and the remaining 1% by the death of the accused (other than suicide). Of the 42 incidents cleared by suicide, 31 (74%) were of a domestic nature.

FIREARM USE IN HOMICIDE

The homicide rate in Canada reached an all-time high in 1975. In 1976, Parliament passed Bill C-105 which abolished the death penalty for first degree murder and, in 1978, passed Bill C-51 which prohibited firearms that did not have a legitimate sporting or recreational purpose (eg. sawed-off shotguns, fully automatic firearms), and which also restricted the ownership of other weapons such as handguns. The latter bill introduced Firearm Acquisition Certificates and provided greater penalties for using firearms in the commission of crimes.

In December 1995, Parliament passed Bill C-68 which set new regulations for the ownership and storage of firearms. As part of this Bill, firearm owners are now required to register and to licence all firearms over the next few years. As well, the legislation introduced new mandatory penalties for those who use firearms in crime and created new offences for gun smuggling.

There are approximately 200 homicides each year caused by firearms. Homicides, however, account for a relatively small portion of all firearm-related deaths. Of the 1,300 deaths in Canada involving firearms in 1994 (the latest year that figures were available), the largest proportion of these deaths was due to suicide (77%), followed by homicide (16%), accidents (5%), and other types (2%).[3]

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[3] *Statistics Canada.* Causes of Death, *Catalogue no. 84-208, Health Statistics Division, 1996.*

Figure 3
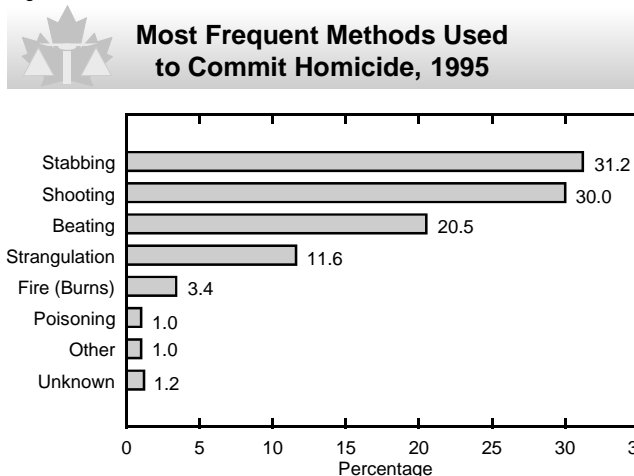
Most Frequent Methods Used to Commit Homicide, 1995

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Shootings account for one-third of all homicides

Since 1979, firearms have been used in about one-third of all homicides each year. In 1995, shootings accounted for 30% of all homicides, slightly lower than average (Figure 3). The 176 shootings represented the lowest number of firearm homicides since 1988, and were distributed as follows: 95 with a handgun, 61 with a rifle/shotgun, 15 with a sawed-off rifle/shotgun, and 5 with a fully-automatic firearm.

Between 1975 and 1990, one in ten homicides were committed each year with handguns. Since 1991, handguns have accounted for one in every six homicides. In 1995, there were 95 homicides committed with handguns, accounting for 16% of all homicides. The use of rifles/shotguns in homicides continues to decrease, from 26% in 1975 to 20% in 1989 to 10% in 1995. Fully-automatic weapons were used in less than 1% of all homicides in 1995 (Figure 4 and Table 4).

In 1995, more homicides were committed by stabbings (31%) than by shootings (30%). Other methods used included beatings - 21%, strangulation/suffocation -12%, fire (burns) - 3% and poisoning - 1% (Table 5).

Figure 4

Firearm Homicides as a Proportion of All Homicides, 1985-1995
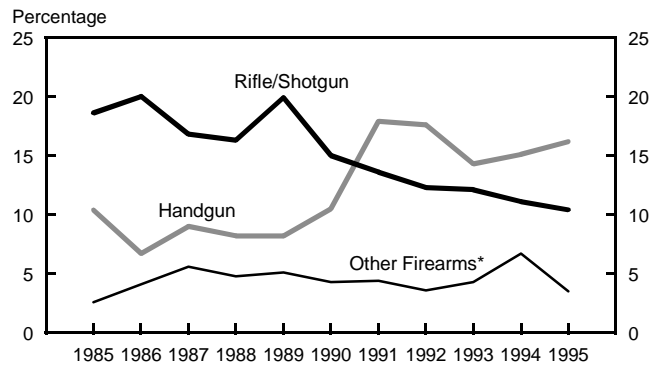
* This category includes sawed-off rifles/shotguns, fully-automatic firearms (since 1991), and firearm-like weapons.
Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Table 4

Firearm Homicides, 1975-1995

Year	Handgun		Rifle/ Shotgun		Fully automatic firearm[1]		Sawed-off shotgun		Other firearms		Total firearm homicides	
	Number	% of total homicides	Number	% of total homicides	Number	% of total homicides	Number	% of total homicides	Number	% of total homicides	Number	% of total homicides
1975	88	12.6	183	26.1	...	...	10	1.4	11	1.6	292	41.7
1976	68	10.2	165	24.7	...	...	5	0.7	20	3.0	258	38.6
1977	61	8.6	161	22.6	...	...	14	2.0	24	3.4	260	36.6
1978	63	9.5	177	26.8	...	...	2	0.3	8	1.2	250	37.8
1979	54	8.6	135	21.4	...	...	4	0.6	14	2.2	207	32.8
1980	62	10.5	120	20.3	...	...	4	0.7	9	1.5	195	32.9
1981	59	9.1	123	19.0	...	...	2	0.3	15	2.3	199	30.7
1982	88	13.2	146	21.9	...	...	9	1.3	5	0.7	248	37.2
1983	78	11.4	127	18.6	...	...	4	0.6	15	2.2	224	32.8
1984	66	9.9	142	21.3	...	...	2	0.3	18	2.7	228	34.2
1985	73	10.4	131	18.6	...	...	9	1.3	9	1.3	222	31.5
1986	38	6.7	114	20.0	...	...	1	0.2	22	3.9	175	30.8
1987	58	9.0	108	16.8	...	...	7	1.1	29	4.5	202	31.4
1988	47	8.2	94	16.3	...	...	7	1.2	21	3.6	169	29.3
1989	54	8.2	131	19.9	...	...	3	0.5	30	4.6	218	33.2
1990	69	10.5	99	15.0	...	...	1	0.2	27	4.1	196	29.7
1991	135	17.9	103	13.6	6	0.8	25	3.3	2	0.3	271	35.8
1992	129	17.6	90	12.3	12	1.6	15	2.0	-	0.0	246	33.6
1993	90	14.3	76	12.1	11	1.7	15	2.4	1	0.2	193	30.6
1994	90	15.1	66	11.1	14	2.3	26	4.4	-	0.0	196	32.9
1995	95	16.2	61	10.4	5	0.9	15	2.6	-	0.0	176	30.0

[1] This category was introduced in 1991 and may account for some of the decrease in the numbers for the "other firearms" category.
... Figures not applicable or not appropriate.
- Nil or zero.

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Table 5

### Homicides by Cause of Death, 1994 and 1995

Cause of Death	1995		1994		Average 1985-1994	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Stabbing	183	31.2	154	25.8	191	29.2
Shooting	176	30.0	196	32.9	208	32.0
Beating	120	20.5	106	17.8	129	19.8
Strangulation	68	11.6	83	13.9	71	10.8
Fire (burns)	20	3.4	17	2.9	20	3.1
Poisoning	6	1.0	11	1.8	3	0.5
Other[1]	6	1.0	23	3.9	23	3.5
Unknown	7	1.2	6	1.0	7	1.0
Total	**586**	**100.0**	**596**	**100.0**	**652**	**100.0**

[1] Prior to 1991, included poisoning.

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Figure 5

Homicide Accused by Age, 1995
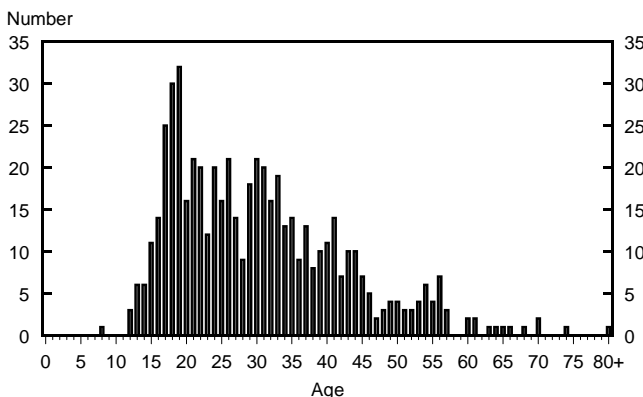
Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program,
Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

PROFILES OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND ACCUSED

Males continue to account for two-thirds of victims and 9 in 10 accused

Since 1985, almost two-thirds of victims were male and one-third were female. This pattern also held true in 1995. The median ages for male and female victims of homicide were 34 and 35 years of age, respectively.

Males accounted for 87% of all those accused of homicide in 1995, consistent with the average for the previous ten years.

When females commit homicide, they are more likely to kill family members than are their male counterparts: 59% versus 29%.

High-risk accused age group population declining

Figure 5 shows that the most common single age for someone accused of homicide in 1995 was 19 years. In recent years, the 15-34 age group was the highest-risk group for accused, accounting for 70% of all accused of homicide in a given year, while comprising only 30% of the total population. This group's population as a proportion of the total population has been declining since 1981, and is expected to continue to decline over the next five years. Other factors being constant, the projected decline in the 15-34 age group may result in a corresponding decline in the homicide rate in the future (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Homicide Rates, 1961-1995 and 15-34 Age Group Proportions, 1961-2001

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program,
Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

One in six homicides committed by a stranger

In general, people are more fearful of being victims of violence at the hands of a stranger than of someone they know. Media coverage of murders perpetrated by strangers tends to reinforce this fear in the minds of the public. However, data indicate that homicides are more likely to be committed by someone known to the victim than by a stranger.

Where an accused was identified, 36% of the victims were killed by a spouse or other family member (40% in 1994), 47% were killed by an acquaintance (46% in 1994), 16% were killed by a stranger (13% in 1994), and in 2% of the cases the accused-victim relationship was not known (Table 6). The proportion of homicides known to be committed by strangers has remained relatively stable over the past ten years, ranging from 12% to 18% (Figure 7). Male victims were more likely to be killed by strangers (22%) than female victims (6%).

Figure 7

Homicides by Accused-Victim Relationship, 1985-1995

* Includes unknown relationships prior to 1991.
Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program,
Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Almost half of victims killed in own residence
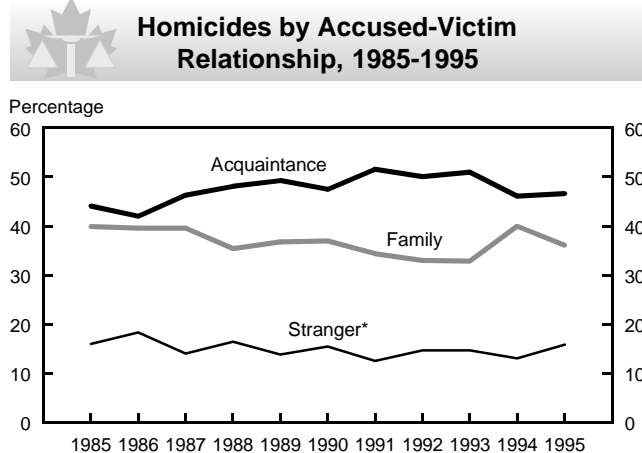
Of the 544 homicide incidents with a known location (13 were unknown), two-thirds (65%) of these occurred in a private residence in 1995, up slightly from 61% in 1994. Forty-seven percent occurred in the victim's residence (occupied either solely by the victim or jointly with the accused); a further 10% occurred in the residence of the accused; 6% occurred in a private residence occupied by other than the victim or the accused; and, in 2% of the cases, the residential occupancy was unknown.

The remaining one-third of locations that were not private residences were distributed as follows: 22% in an open area (e.g., a parking lot, street or field), 8% in a commercial area (e.g., bar, bank, restaurant), 3% in a private vehicle and the remaining 2% in a public institution (correctional facility (three), hospital (three), community centre/arena (two), school (two), and community police station (one).

In 1995, females were more likely to be killed in a private residence than males (76% versus 56%). This is not surprising, given two facts: females are killed in greater proportion than males (60% versus 24%) by spouses and family members, and domestic homicides usually occur in a private residence (87% of the time in 1995).

Separated and divorced persons at high risk

This section examines only those victims and accused who were 15 years of age and over at the time of the homicide. Thirty-six percent of homicide victims in 1995 were single (ie. never married), 37% were married, 17% were separated or divorced, and 4% were widowed. The marital status was unknown for the remaining 6%.

Separated and divorced persons were at greatest risk of being a victim of homicide, comprising 17% of such victims, but only 6% of the population. Male victims were more likely to be single than female victims (45% versus 17%), while females were more likely to be married (52% versus 30%).

Almost half (48%) of the 542 persons (15 years of age and over) accused of homicide in 1995 were single at the time of the offence, 31% were married or living common-law, 12% were separated or divorced, and less than 1% were widowed. The marital status of the remaining 8% was unknown. Similar to the profile for victims, single and separated or divorced persons charged with homicide were over-represented in relation to their proportion in the Canadian population. Accused males were more likely than females to be single at the time of the offence (50% versus 29%), while females were more likely to be married (54% compared with 29%).

> *Spousal homicides include persons in registered marriages and common-law relationships, as well as persons separated or divorced from such a union.*

Women are six times more likely to be killed by a spouse than by a stranger

Spousal homicides continue to account for one out of every six solved homicides. In 1995, 90 persons were killed by a spouse, up slightly from 85 the previous year. From 1985 through 1994, 110 victims were killed by a spouse each year on average, with women representing three-quarters of these victims.

In 1995, 53 women were killed by a current spouse (legal or common-law), and 16 were killed by a separated or divorced spouse. The data also show that women were six times more likely to be killed by a spouse than by a stranger. Of the 21 men killed by a spouse in 1995, 20 were killed by a current spouse and 1 by a separated spouse.

Many spousal homicides are a tragic outcome of ongoing domestic violence: in 1995, 6 in 10 incidents of spousal homicide involved a history of domestic violence known to police.

Estrangement associated with increased risk

Canadian data indicate that 23% of women killed in registered marriages were separated at the time of the incident. Studies

Table 6

Solved Homicides by Accused-Victim Relationsip[1], 1994 and 1995

Relationship Type (accused was)	1995		1994		Average 1991-1994	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Family Relationship						
Husband (legal and common-law)	53	11.1	51	10.7	56	10.2
Husband (separated/divorced)	16	3.3	14	2.9	20	3.6
Wife (legal and common-law)	20	4.2	19	4.0	20	3.6
Wife (separated/divorced)	1	0.2	1	0.2	2	0.4
Father	30	6.3	29	6.1	22	4.0
Mother	10	2.1	19	4.0	19	3.5
Child	9	1.9	20	4.2	21	3.8
Sibling	14	2.9	17	3.6	13	2.4
Other Family Relation	20	4.2	20	4.2	18	3.3
Total Family	**173**	**36.1**	**190**	**39.9**	**191**	**34.7**
Acquaintance						
Estranged lover	7	1.5	5	1.1	9	1.6
Intimate relation	20	4.2	13	2.7	21	3.8
Close acquaintance	33	6.9	30	6.3	32	5.8
Business associate (legal)	12	2.5	11	2.3	18	3.3
Business associate (illegal)[2]	31	6.5	49	10.3	38	6.9
Neighbour	19	4.0	14	2.9	25	4.5
Casual acquaintance	101	21.1	98	20.6	128	23.3
Total Acquaintance	**223**	**46.6**	**220**	**46.2**	**271**	**49.3**
Stranger	76	15.9	62	13.0	75	13.6
Unknown Relationship	7	1.5	4	0.8	13	2.4
TOTAL SOLVED HOMICIDES	**479**	**100.0**	**476**	**100.0**	**550**	**100.0**

[1] Includes only homicide offences in which there are known suspects. If there was more than one suspect, only the closest relationship to the victim was recorded.
[2] Includes business relationships such as prostitutes, drug dealers and their clients.

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

have shown that wives are particularly at risk during the first two months after separation.[4,5]

Female victims were also at higher risk of being killed by another family member (19%) than male victims (17%), or someone with whom they shared an intimate relationship (9% of female victims compared with 4% of male victims in 1995). Males were at greater risk of being killed by a non-intimate acquaintance (51%) or a stranger (21%) than female victims (24% and 7% respectively). These patterns are also evident for other violent crimes.

Other family-related homicides in 1995 included: 40 victims killed by a parent (30 by a father or step-father and 10 by a mother), 9 by one of their children, 14 by a sibling, and 20 by another relative.

Domestic homicides are less likely than other types of homicide to involve firearms: 25% involved firearms compared with 30%

of non-domestic homicides. In the 43 domestic homicides involving firearms in 1995, rifles and shotguns (including sawed-off guns) were used in three-quarters (77%) of the cases.

One-half of accused and 4 in 10 victims had consumed alcohol or drugs

Alcohol and drugs are known to play a role in the commission of many crimes, including homicide. For the purposes of this report, "drugs" refer to illegal, controlled and restricted substances, as defined by the *Narcotic Control Act* and the *Food and Drugs Act*.

In 1995, police reported that 38% of homicide victims had consumed alcohol or drugs, or both, at the time of the offence: 25% had taken alcohol only; 8% both alcohol and drugs; and, 5% drugs only. A further 41% of the victims had not consumed either, and alcohol and drug use was unknown for the remaining 21% of victims. This pattern has remained consistent back to 1991 when this information was first collected. Male victims were almost twice as likely to have consumed alcohol and/or drugs as female victims. Where the blood-alcohol concentration level of the victim was known to police (79 incidents), 21% of these victims were found to be over the legal driving limit (0.08).

[4] Wallace, A. Homicide: the social reality, Sydney, New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 1986.
[5] Wilson, M. and M. Daly. "Spousal homicide risk and estrangement" in Violence and Victims 8, 1993.

In 1995, consistent with previous years, police reported that almost half (47%) of all persons charged with homicide had consumed alcohol, drugs or both at the time of the offence: 30% had ingested alcohol; 4% had taken drugs; and, 13% had taken both alcohol and drugs. Twenty-four percent of accused persons had not taken any intoxicating substance and, for the remaining 29%, alcohol and drug consumption was unknown. There was little difference in these patterns by sex of the accused.

One in nine homicide incidents are drug-related

Drug abuse and drug-dealing are believed to be the precipitating factors of many types of crimes, including homicide. Accordingly, in 1991, the following question was added to the Homicide Survey: "Was there evidence of drug trafficking or settling of drug-related accounts". In 1995, one in nine (60) homicide incidents were reported by police to be drug-related.

One-quarter of all homicide incidents reported in 1995 occurred during the commission of another criminal offence. Of these 127 incidents, 91 were committed at the same time as another violent offence: 40 during a robbery, 15 during an assault, 15 during a sexual assault, nine during an arson, eight during a kidnapping, and four during other violent offences. A further 13 homicides occurred during a property offence and 23 in combination with other types of criminal offences.

Two police officers killed in line of duty

Some occupations involve more risk to personal safety than others. In 1995, two police officers were victims of homicide while on duty (both by firearms), compared with one in 1994, two in 1993 and one in 1992. By comparison, 72 police officers were victims of homicide in the United States in 1995, 61 (85%) of which were killed by firearms. For the eleventh consecutive year, no federal or provincial correctional worker was a victim of homicide in the line of duty.

Prostitutes at high risk

Other victims of homicide in the course of their work in 1995 included nine known prostitutes (compared with 16 in 1994, nine in 1993 and five in 1992). It should be noted that the number of prostitutes reported killed most likely under-represents the actual figure: only those incidents where the police are certain that the victim was killed in the course of engaging in prostitution-related activities are counted.

Taxi drivers are also a high-risk group because of the nature of their job. In 1995, four taxi drivers were killed, compared with four in 1994, seven in 1993 and three in 1992.

YOUTH HOMICIDE

Since the introduction of the *Young Offenders Act* in 1984, much publicity has focussed on youths accused of homicide and their subsequent treatment by the courts. Recently, a number of violent incidents involving youths have been widely reported by the media, initiating a public outcry for harsher penalties for young offenders, and for the lowering of the age of criminal responsibility

from the current 12 years. As a result, the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs is currently looking at these and other related issues.

Youth homicide rate stable

Over the last ten years, the youth homicide rate has remained relatively stable while the homicide rate for adults has generally been decreasing. From 1985 through 1994, an average of 47 youths were charged each year, accounting for an average of 8% of homicide suspects annually. In 1995, 65 youths (representing 12% of all homicide suspects) were charged with homicide. This total is eight more than in 1994 and is the highest number of youths accused in 20 years.

Figure 8 shows that, from 1985 to 1994, the youth homicide rate fluctuated between 1.5 and 2.5 per 100,000 youths. While the 1995 rate of 2.7 was higher than average, it is difficult to say, given the small numbers, if this is the start of a new trend or simply normal year-to-year fluctuations in the numbers (Table 7).

Youths tend to kill other youths

Of the 539 homicides between 1985 and 1995 where youths were identified as the accused, 28% of the victims were under the age of 18 years compared to 11% of victims of homicide committed by adults (Table 8).

Figure 8
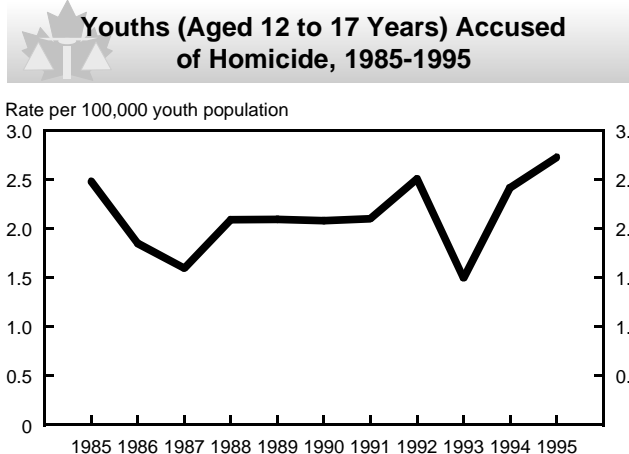
Youths (Aged 12 to 17 Years) Accused of Homicide, 1985-1995

Rate per 100,000 youth population

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Table 8

Victim Age Group	Youth Accused 1985-1995	Adult Accused 1985-1995
Less than 12 years	10%	8%
12-17 years	18%	3%
18-24 years	14%	16%
25-39 years	20%	39%
40-59 years	23%	24%
60 years and over	15%	10%

Table 7

Youths (Aged 12-17 Years) Accused of Homicide, Canada 1985-1995

Year	Youth population (Aged 12-17) (000s)	Number of Youths accused of homicide	Rate per 100,000 Youth population	Percent of Total Accused (%)
1985	2,299.3	57	2.48	8.85
1986	2,272.4	42	1.85	7.61
1987	2,260.9	36	1.59	6.10
1988	2,249.5	47	2.09	8.87
1989	2,245.7	47	2.09	8.36
1990	2,260.1	47	2.08	8.47
1991	2,284.8	48	2.10	7.52
1992	2,315.9	58	2.50	8.99
1993	2,341.7	35	1.49	6.42
1994	2,360.3	57	2.41	10.54
1995	2,384.6	65	2.73	11.65

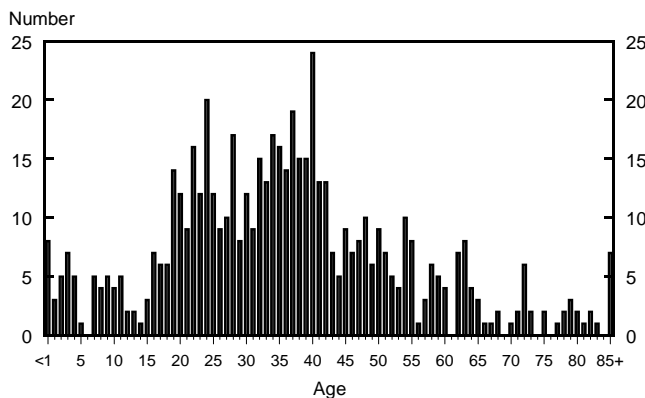*Source : Homicide Survey, Policing Survey Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.*

Large drop in infant homicides in 1995

Violence against children is a source of major concern in Canadian society. In total, there were 52 children (under the age of 12) killed in 1995, compared with an average of 56 killed each year since 1985.

During the previous ten years, an annual average of 20 infants under one year of age have become victims of homicide, accounting for between 2.5% and 5% of all victims. In 1993 and 1994, the single age of greatest risk of homicide was "under one year of age". This pattern did not hold in 1995, with only eight victims being under one year of age. Figure 9 shows that forty year-olds were at greatest risk of being a homicide victim in 1995. Persons 50 years of age and older accounted for 21% of all victims, while comprising 25% of the general population.

Figure 9

Homicide Victims by Age, 1995

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

The figure for infants may be under-reported since some claims of accidental childhood death (resulting from a fall or "sudden infant death" for example) could actually be a result of child abuse. Coincidentally, in 1995 most provinces legislated, or considered legislating, mandatory coroner inquests into deaths of children under two years of age. Of the eight children under one year of age killed in 1995, six were killed by a parent (three by the father and three by the mother), one by an aunt, and the accused was unknown for the remaining victim. Under Section 233 of the *Criminal Code*, there is a provision for diminished responsibility (infanticide) in the case of a mother killing her new born child, if at the time of the act she was not fully recovered from the act of giving birth or was otherwise affected mentally by the act of giving birth. In 1995, one of the three accused mothers was charged with infanticide.

Since 1985, females were accused in 38% of child homicides, compared with 10% of adult homicides. Of the females implicated in child homicide, 12% were under the age of 18, and 39% were under the age of 25. Research has found that mothers who killed their children were younger than other female offenders, and those charged with infanticide were "barely more than children themselves".[6]

METHODOLOGY

The Homicide Survey has collected police-reported data on homicide incidents, including the characteristics of victims and accused, since 1961. Whenever a homicide becomes known to the police, the police department in whose jurisdiction it is committed completes a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire remained virtually unchanged from 1961 to 1990. In 1991, in an effort to respond to changing information needs, the survey was revised to add some new data elements as well as improve existing ones.

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[6] Silverman, R. and L. Kennedy. Deadly Deeds - Murder in Canada, *Nelson Canada, 1988: 188.*

Note that the homicide "count" for a particular year reflects the number of homicides "reported" to police that year, regardless of the date the homicide actually occurred.

Glossary of Terms

Homicide is **murder** when a person intentionally causes the death of another human being, or means to cause bodily harm that the person knows is likely to cause death.

-   **First degree murder** occurs when:

a) it is planned and deliberate or,

b) the victim is a person employed and acting in the course of his/her work for the preservation and maintenance of the public peace (e.g., police officer, correctional worker) or,

c) the death is caused by a person committing or attempting to commit certain serious offences (e.g., sexual assault, kidnapping, hijacking).

-   **Second degree murder** is all murder that is not first degree.

-   **Manslaughter** is generally considered to be a homicide committed in the heat of passion caused by sudden provocation. It also includes other culpable homicides that are not murder or infanticide.

-   **Infanticide** occurs when a female causes the death of her newly-born child, if at the time of the act or omission, she is not fully recovered from the effects of giving birth to the child and by reason thereof, or of the effect of lactation consequent on the birth of the child, her mind is then disturbed.

Offence - equals the number of homicide victims.

Incident - is the occurrence of one (or more) criminal offence(s) during one single, distinct event, regardless of the number of victims. If there are multiple victims or multiple suspects, the offences must occur at the same location and at the same time if they are to be included within the same incident. The incident count will normally be lower than the victim (or offence) count due to incidents involving multiple victims.

Violence in the Violence Against Women Survey - is defined as an experience of physical or sexual assault that is consistent with the legal definitions of these offences and could be acted upon by a police officer.

Table 9

Number of Homicides, 1961-1995

Year	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Yukon	N.W.T.	Canada
1961	1	1	6	2	52	89	15	14	18	34	1	-	233
1962	-	1	10	8	62	76	19	13	18	55	3	-	265
1963	3	-	6	5	69	76	16	8	27	35	3	1	249
1964	5	-	13	5	52	81	16	20	25	32	1	3	253
1965	6	4	10	5	63	77	15	15	20	57	3	2	277
1966	3	1	9	6	56	71	17	12	27	48	-	-	250
1967	1	-	10	5	75	114	15	25	38	47	6	2	338
1968	5	-	9	5	102	104	28	23	25	73	1	-	375
1969	5	1	12	1	126	111	28	33	23	50	-	1	391
1970	1	1	15	8	141	115	29	24	42	78	6	7	467
1971	2	-	16	10	124	151	33	29	45	61	-	2	473
1972	2	2	14	11	157	141	36	28	37	88	3	2	521
1973	3	-	19	17	155	160	38	23	36	87	4	4	546
1974	3	2	8	21	169	160	42	31	44	107	5	8	600
1975	4	-	14	12	226	206	37	36	57	98	6	5	701
1976	6	2	25	14	205	183	31	34	68	88	4	8	668
1977	8	1	14	38	197	192	44	46	70	91	6	4	711
1978	9	4	13	27	180	182	39	32	84	85	2	4	661
1979	5	-	17	11	186	175	44	36	56	90	4	7	631
1980	3	1	12	9	181	158	31	31	55	105	2	4	592
1981	4	1	11	17	186	170	41	29	73	110	1	5	648
1982	6	-	12	13	190	184	35	39	70	109	2	7	667
1983	6	-	13	11	190	202	40	33	75	108	1	3	682
1984	6	-	15	14	198	190	43	30	54	110	2	5	667
1985	5	1	26	14	219	193	26	28	63	113	6	10	704
1986	4	-	15	12	156	139	47	26	64	89	3	14	569
1987	5	-	14	20	174	204	44	30	73	78	-	2	644
1988	7	1	11	8	154	186	31	23	66	80	1	8	576
1989	5	1	16	18	215	175	43	22	67	86	2	7	657
1990	-	1	9	12	184	182	39	36	74	110	1	12	660
1991	11	2	21	17	181	245	43	21	84	128	-	3	756
1992	2	-	21	11	166	242	29	32	92	122	2	13	732
1993	7	2	19	11	159	193	31	30	49	122	-	7	630
1994	4	1	19	15	126	192	29	24	66	113	3	4	596
1995	5	1	16	14	135	181	27	21	59	120	4	3	586
Total	**152**	**32**	**490**	**427**	**5,211**	**5,500**	**1,121**	**937**	**1,844**	**3,007**	**88**	**167**	**18,976**

- Nil or zero.

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

Table 10

Homicide Rates[1], 1961-1995[2]

Year	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Yukon	N.W.T.	Canada
1961	0.22	0.96	0.81	0.33	0.99	1.43	1.63	1.51	1.35	2.09	6.85	0.00	1.28
1962	0.00	0.93	1.38	1.32	1.15	1.20	2.03	1.40	1.31	3.31	20.00	0.00	1.43
1963	0.63	0.00	0.80	0.82	1.26	1.17	1.69	0.86	1.92	2.06	20.00	3.85	1.32
1964	1.04	0.00	1.72	0.82	0.93	1.22	1.67	2.12	1.75	1.83	6.67	11.11	1.31
1965	1.23	3.67	1.32	0.81	1.11	1.13	1.55	1.58	1.38	3.17	21.43	7.41	1.41
1966	0.61	0.92	1.19	0.97	0.97	1.02	1.77	1.26	1.85	2.56	0.00	0.00	1.25
1967	0.20	0.00	1.32	0.81	1.28	1.60	1.60	1.56	2.61	2.55	2.42	40.00	6.90	1.66
1968	0.99	0.00	1.17	0.80	1.72	1.43	2.88	2.40	1.64	3.64	6.67	0.00	1.81
1969	0.97	0.90	1.55	0.16	2.11	1.50	2.86	3.44	1.48	2.43	0.00	3.23	1.86
1970	0.19	0.91	1.92	1.28	2.34	1.52	2.95	2.55	2.63	3.67	35.29	21.21	2.19
1971	0.38	0.00	2.00	1.55	2.01	1.92	3.30	3.10	2.69	2.71	0.00	5.45	2.15
1972	0.37	1.76	1.74	1.69	2.53	1.77	3.59	3.03	2.18	3.81	14.78	5.12	2.34
1973	0.55	0.00	2.33	2.58	2.49	1.98	3.76	2.52	2.08	3.66	18.78	9.73	2.42
1974	0.54	1.72	0.98	3.15	2.69	1.95	4.12	3.40	2.50	4.36	23.58	19.32	2.62
1975	0.72	0.00	1.69	1.77	3.56	2.47	3.60	3.91	3.14	3.90	27.27	11.57	3.02
1976	1.06	1.68	2.99	2.02	3.19	2.17	3.00	3.64	3.63	3.46	17.70	17.94	2.84
1977	1.41	0.83	1.66	5.45	3.05	2.25	4.23	4.86	3.58	3.53	26.09	8.89	2.99
1978	1.58	3.28	1.54	3.85	2.78	2.11	3.74	3.35	4.14	3.24	8.37	8.77	2.75
1979	0.88	0.00	2.00	1.56	2.87	2.01	4.23	3.74	2.66	3.36	16.60	15.18	2.60
1980	0.52	0.81	1.40	1.27	2.77	1.80	2.99	3.20	2.50	3.81	8.16	8.57	2.41
1981	0.69	0.81	1.28	2.40	2.83	1.92	3.95	2.96	3.17	3.88	4.15	10.44	2.60
1982	1.04	0.00	1.39	1.83	2.88	2.06	3.34	3.94	2.94	3.78	8.10	14.00	2.65
1983	1.03	0.00	1.49	1.53	2.87	2.23	3.76	3.28	3.13	3.70	4.20	5.83	2.68
1984	1.03	0.00	1.71	1.94	2.98	2.06	4.00	2.95	2.25	3.72	8.30	9.42	2.60
1985	0.86	0.78	2.93	1.93	3.27	2.07	2.40	2.72	2.61	3.78	24.39	18.18	2.71
1986	0.69	0.00	1.68	1.65	2.32	1.47	4.30	2.52	2.62	2.95	12.10	25.27	2.17
1987	0.87	0.00	1.56	2.74	2.56	2.11	4.00	2.89	2.99	2.55	0.00	3.59	2.43
1988	1.21	0.77	1.22	1.09	2.24	1.88	2.81	2.23	2.68	2.56	3.72	14.21	2.14
1989	0.87	0.77	1.76	2.44	3.09	1.72	3.89	2.15	2.68	2.68	7.30	12.17	2.40
1990	0.00	0.76	0.99	1.62	2.62	1.76	3.52	3.56	2.89	3.33	3.57	20.20	2.37
1991	1.90	1.53	2.29	2.27	2.56	2.34	3.87	2.09	3.23	3.79	0.00	4.89	2.69
1992	0.34	0.00	2.27	1.46	2.32	2.27	2.59	3.17	3.47	3.51	6.60	20.77	2.56
1993r	1.20	1.50	2.04	1.46	2.20	1.78	2.76	2.97	1.82	3.41	0.00	10.99	2.18
1994r	0.69	0.74	2.03	1.98	1.73	1.76	2.57	2.37	2.43	3.08	10.10	6.18	2.04
1995	0.87	0.73	1.71	1.84	1.84	1.63	2.37	2.07	2.15	3.19	13.29	4.56	1.98

[1] *Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population.*
[2] *Estimates of population used:*
     1961-1990: (IR) Revised intercensal estimates
     1991-1992: (PD) Final postcensal estimates
        1993:   (PR) Updated postcensal estimates
        1994:   (PR) Preliminary postcensal estimates
        1995:   (PR) Preliminary postcensal estimates
     As of 1971, population estimates were adjusted to reflect new methods of calculation.
[r] *Revised.*

Source: Homicide Survey, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, July 1996.

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